

BV
4315
S38
1928

portion for children

DATE	ISSUED TO

BV
4315
S38
1928

Scrib

Th n for children

IRA J. TAYLOR LIBRARY
THE ILIFF SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
2233 SO. UNIVERSITY BLVD.
DENVER, COLORADO 80210

GIVEN TO

The Iliff School of Theology

by

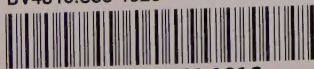
Mary Bigelow

ILIFF SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Scribner, Frank J.

The portion for the children : a pastor'

BV4315.S38 1928



3 3528 00074 1216

THE PORTION FOR THE CHILDREN



THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
NEW YORK • BOSTON • CHICAGO • DALLAS
ATLANTA • SAN FRANCISCO

MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED
LONDON • BOMBAY • CALCUTTA
MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD.
TORONTO

THE PORTION FOR THE CHILDREN

A Pastor's Talks with the Children
of His Congregation

BY
FRANK J. SCRIBNER

IRA J. TAYLOR LIBRARY
THE ILIFF SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
DENVER, COLORADO

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1928

All rights reserved

Sec 3p
1927

COPYRIGHT, 1927,
By THE MACMILLAN COMPANY.

Set up and electrotyped.
Published February, 1927.
Reissued January, 1928.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY THE CORNWALL PRESS

TO THE CHILDREN, PAST AND PRESENT,
WHO HAVE LISTENED TO THESE SERMONS
AND WHOSE INTEREST SUGGESTED THE IDEA
OF THEIR PUBLICATION, THIS VOLUME IS
DEDICATED

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

A SERMON to children consists of two parts—the story, figure, or object which corresponds to the text of a more formal sermon, and its application. In these sermons I have tried to make the applications my own. The texts have been drawn from sources too infinitely varied to be separately acknowledged, or even remembered. For them all I am grateful, and if I can add to my brother ministers' list of such texts, this book will not have failed of its purpose.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	THE HICKORY NUTS	13
II.	THE TOBOGGAN	17
III.	THE SPIDER AND THE HORNET	20
IV.	THE CAMERA THAT IS YOU	23
V.	ANOTHER CHANCE	27
VI.	"A MILE AND A BITTOCK"	31
VII.	COUNTESS AND JACOB	35
VIII.	THE FROZEN RADIATOR	38
IX.	HOW NOT TO LEARN	41
X.	WOODCHUCK HOLES	44
XI.	THE THREE HARDEST WORDS	48
XII.	THE CHERRY TREE STORY	51
XIII.	THE ORCHESTRA	55
XIV.	MINDING ONESELF	58
XV.	"GO TELL"	62
XVI.	THE ROLLER SKATES	65
XVII.	THE FIRST ROBIN	68
XVIII.	TWO COUSINS	71
XIX.	THE STORY OF JOHN LOUDEN McADAM	74
XX.	THE FOUR T'S—TEMPER	77
XXI.	THE FOUR T'S—TONGUE	81
XXII.	THE FOUR T'S—TIME	84
XXIII.	THE FOUR T'S—THOUGHTS	88
XXIV.	"ASK ME, I LIVE HERE"	91
XXV.	ONE LAZY CYLINDER	94
XXVI.	THE UNDERINFLATED TIRE	98
XXVII.	THE STONE-BRUISED TIRE	101
XXVIII.	THE TIRE OUT OF ALIGNMENT	104

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXIX. THE TIRE THAT WASN'T USED . . .	107
XXX. LAND IS BOUND TO GROW SOMETHING	110
XXXI. THE LITTLE PARTRIDGES	114
XXXII. SHAVING	116
XXXIII. THE COW AND THE BRIDGE . . .	119
XXXIV. ABOVE THE CLOUDS	122
XXXV. "BLOOD WILL TELL"	125
XXXVI. RULERS AND RULES	128
XXXVII. THE FIRST OF THE MONTH . . .	132
XXXVIII. THE GUIDE'S ROPE	136
XXXIX. SEEING THROUGH A MAN	139
XL. THE LITTERED WORKSHOP	142
XLI. "HE CAN'T AFFORD TO MISS"	145
XLII. THE GIRL WHO WORSHIPED IDOLS .	147
XLIII. BARGAINS	150
XLIV. THE REFEREE	153
XLV. NOTHING TO NOTHING	157
XLVI. A MAN OR A SHEEP?	159
XLVII. ON DUTY	163
XLVIII. "AN EXCELLENT SPINE"	166
XLIX. THE SAND IN THE BEARINGS . . .	170
L. THE BURNING GLASS	174
LI. THE CHRISTMAS INVITATION	177
LII. "THANK YOU" NOTES	180

THE PORTION FOR THE CHILDREN

THE PORTION FOR THE CHILDREN

I

THE HICKORY NUTS

WHAT do you think I kindled the fire with this morning, boys and girls? It was with hickory nuts. This is the way it happened. Some three or four years ago last fall we gathered them. It was a good year and we happened to be where there were several trees and we gathered a lot. Of course we didn't want to use them up too fast, and to save them we put a large pasteboard box full up in the attic. After a while it happened that a box containing something else was set on top of the box where they were, and by and by we forgot all about them. Then when we moved and were getting all our things together, we found this box of nuts. We put it in with our things and unpacked it. And we cracked a nut. The kernel was all dried up. We cracked another. It was yellow and tasted rancid. We cracked one after another without finding one good nut. The whole box full was spoiled, good for nothing but fire, and so this morning when

I wanted some good kindling I put them in the furnace and they burned beautifully.

Sometimes it happens that to be too saving is the most wasteful thing in the world. There is a verse in the Bible that says, "There is that scattereth and increaseth yet more. There is that withholdeth more than is meet, but only to want." That is a hard verse in its language, but its meaning is easy. Sometimes when you save things too well, you waste them just as we wasted the hickory nuts. Many times the way to get the most out of good things is to use them and share them.

A boy was living in a boarding school, and one day he received a fine big box of things to eat from home. And I tell you, that seems good when you have been eating in a boarding house for two or three months. The food in a school boarding house is good and wholesome and all that, but you get awfully lonesome for the things that your own mother cooks, and when a box full of them comes to the express office for you, it seems as if nothing in the world could be much nicer. Well, this boy unpacked his box, and then he thought it over. There were two things he might do. He could invite in a crowd of his friends and have a big blow-out in his room. And that is lots of fun—but that way a box of food only lasts for one evening! Or he could put it away in his closet, and eat a little to-day, and some more to-morrow, and so on as long as it lasted. And this boy decided that this was

what he would do. He felt that he just couldn't afford to let all those good things go for one party. And so he didn't say anything about his box, but kept it, and nibbled away at it himself. And of course you know what happened. The cake got all dry and hard, and the sandwiches curled up at the edges, and the chicken began to have a queer taste, and something seemed to be wrong with his stomach after a few days of nibbling all the time between meals. And the next time a box came he was wise enough to see that the real way to enjoy it was to share it with his friends. It didn't last so long, but it was ever so much more fun while it lasted.

A girl had a new book for Christmas. It was a story that everybody was talking about and wanting to read. There was a long list of reservations ahead for the library copy, and she knew how many of her friends would be anxious to borrow hers. But she rather hated to lend it. She knew how often it happened that a book that she loaned came back with finger marks on the margins, the back broken, and even pencil marks here and there in it. And she almost decided that she would keep this book to herself. But she got to thinking. And she decided that after all there would be more satisfaction in knowing that her book was bringing pleasure to others than in keeping it perfectly clean and fresh by laying it away and forgetting it. And she never was sorry that she decided that way.

There are people who seem to think that they

miss something if they don't keep the good things of life to themselves. They hate to let others into their good times. They don't like to introduce their friends to new friends. They don't lend, or give or share. But there are others who have learned how much more happiness there is in life if other people enter into it. I hope you have learned that already. The best things in life can't be kept to oneself. They spoil on your hands if you save them like that. They just dry up like the hickory nuts.

II

THE TOBOGGAN

LAST week, boys and girls, I went tobogganing for the first time in my life. Now don't get the idea that I never went sliding, for the hills where I came from are longer and steeper than the longest and steepest ones around here. Only we slid on big double sleds instead of toboggans, and let me tell you, boys, it was real sliding. It gives me a gone feeling in the pit of my stomach now to think of the way we used to come down those hills, dodging teams, and slewing around corners. But that isn't what I started out to talk about.

As I said, last week I went tobogganing, as some of you boys know, and we had a great time. There were ten of us, and we had two toboggans, and you can imagine that before we had slid very many slides we were measuring pretty carefully to see which toboggan could go farther on the slide. And the toboggan that I was riding on was usually coming off second best. The other crowd was beating us by thirty or forty feet every slide.

But on the last trip down, we fooled them. We not only went farther than they did on that trip, but farther than they had gone all that afternoon.

18 THE PORTION FOR THE CHILDREN

And this is the way that we did it. We found a youngster who didn't have any toboggan, and we sat a little closer and made room for her, and gave her a ride with us. And that made us heavier, and that made us go faster and that made us go farther. For that is the interesting thing about a toboggan—the more people you carry, the faster you go. The more people you give a good time to, the better time everyone has.

That isn't a bad sermon that the toboggan preaches. At any rate, it is a sermon that some people do not learn as long as they live. The way to get fun is to give fun to others. The way to be happy is to make other people happy.

I hope you know how much better half an apple tastes when somebody else is eating the other half than a whole apple when somebody near by hasn't any. I hope you know what fun it is sometimes to take your little brother or sister along with you when you go to play. I mean the sort of play that you don't usually give him a share in because he is too little and would be in the way. Maybe he is in the way. Maybe you don't catch so many fish, or skate quite so far, or dare take quite so high a slide as if he wasn't along. But just you see if it isn't every bit as much fun. I hope you all know how good it feels to give things away, especially if you rather hate to see them go.

And when the times come when you feel particularly mean and out of sorts, like that day when you

had a cold and couldn't go to the party, or that day when the baby broke your best doll, or that day when your marks in school were way, way down—when such times come, do you know the best possible way to get to feeling better? Make up your mind that you are going to do your best to make everybody in the house just as happy as you can make him. And if you don't find that you get happy yourself in giving others a lift, you will be the very first one in this world who hasn't.

III

THE SPIDER AND THE HORNET

IN the corner of the porch of the house where we spent our vacation a great gray spider had spun her web. She was big, and watchful, and ugly looking. And whenever we ate a meal on the porch, several yellow jackets were always flying around the table. Often I wondered which would win in a fair fight. Here was the hornet with her hard, strong, yellow and black armor, and with her poisoned dagger, her jaws strong enough to tear off pieces of wood, and her glittering wings. Here was the spider, with her big, soft body with no armor and no wings. I wanted to see which was the stronger. So one day I clapped a tumbler over a hornet as she settled down on the table and let her go in such a way as to make her fly straight for the web. Perhaps it was rather a cruel thing to do—but at any rate, I did it. And then I watched to see what would happen.

And do you know, there wasn't any fair fight at all. The hornet didn't have a chance. At the first touch of her body on the spider's web, there was a rush—the spider threw a lasso, and before you could snap your fingers was back safely out of

reach, with one turn of that silken cord already around the hornet's body, and with the cord ready for another rush. And over and over and over again she rushed out and back, throwing that cord around the body and legs and wings of her enemy. In less time than it has taken me to tell it, there was that terrible fighting insect, tied hand and foot and wing and sting, helpless. And then the spider went calmly to work, cut the hornet loose from the web without releasing the bonds that held her helpless, dragged her off into the corner where she lived, killed her and sucked her dry; and the next morning I found the empty suit of armor tossed down on the floor below.

How easily the hornet could have won if she only could have got at the spider. Every advantage was on her side except that tiny silken cord that, fold by fold, tied her helpless. It is easy to understand why some strong people are beaten by very small things. Habits are just like those spider's cords. They seem small enough, but, fold by fold, they get their meshes around you.

Many a boy has started to smoke cigarettes because he thought it was smart. It is against the law, which made it all the more fun. He has watched his chance to buy them. He has stolen away for a chance to smoke them. And for a while he has had a great time. But little by little they were tying strand after strand of habit rope around him till he has found himself bound hand and foot.

Many a girl has begun doing her work just pretty well. She has found it easier that way. She has slighted her tasks at home and at school and on committees. And little by little the fashion of careless work has thrown its web around her, till, before she has known it, she has been tied, tied till she could not do her best when she wanted to.

I have known boys who started to swear because it sounded big and grown up, boys who rather practiced the use of such words. But each word has thrown its silken lasso around them till they haven't been free to control their own tongues.

Look out for those things. They are easy to beat when you can get at them, but once they get their meshes around you, they are terrible.

IV

THE CAMERA THAT IS YOU

I WONDER whether you boys and girls would be interested to-day in hearing how pictures are made. I said *made*, not taken. I suppose all of you have seen a camera work, and perhaps have sometimes pressed the button that takes the pictures, but I wonder if many of you know how the picture is made after it is taken. If you should open up the camera right after taking the picture, you wouldn't see anything at all. More than that, you would fix the picture so that you never could see it. But I'm getting ahead of my story.

Listen. Away in the very back of the camera there is a little strip of what we call film. It is thin and shiny, and on one side it has a thin, yellow coating. And when we snap the camera, away back on that yellow coating something happens. The film looks just the same, and feels just the same, but the picture has been taken. And now you can do either one of two things.

Here is the first thing. You can take that film into a perfectly dark room, put it in a dish, pour a certain kind of liquid on it, rock it back and forth, and keep it in the liquid just long enough. You

can have just a dim red light to watch it by, but if you watch it closely by that red light you will see a picture begin to come out, and get darker and darker till finally it is time to stop. Then you put it in another dish, pour on another kind of liquid, and watch again, and the picture gets clearer and clearer till it is perfectly clear. And then your film has been *developed*. You can hold it up to the light and look through it, and you see a strange sort of backside-foremost picture. But if you take that backside-foremost picture, and put it against a certain sort of paper, hold it up to the light, and treat the paper as you treated the film, then you get a real picture, and then another, and another. You can make dozens and dozens of pictures, and can give them to your friends or keep them as long as you live.

That is one way you can treat the film. But if, instead of doing all that, you were to take the back off the camera here, in the daylight, and before you have developed the picture at all, let one little flash of light into the film, then your picture would be spoiled forever, and nothing that anybody could ever do would bring it back.

Let me tell you something. *You* are a camera. You are taking pictures every minute that you are awake. Everything that you see, or read, or think, or imagine, or do, takes a picture inside your head. You know how you can stop and think of something that you have seen yesterday, and just see it with

your eyes closed? That is the way you make a camera of yourself, and you are doing it all the time. You can take good pictures and bad pictures—helpful, happy, busy pictures, or hateful, mean, dirty pictures. But you are taking some kind in spite of yourself.

Suppose you think of going home from church to-day and helping your mother with the dinner. There is a fine picture. Look at it hard enough, and you will help her! Suppose you think of a mean trick to play on your sister. That is a different kind of picture. If you keep it and look at it, you will do the mean thing. The camera that is you keeps working. You study a lesson, you stop to look at the pictures in front of the theater, you run a race, you listen to a story; and every one of those things makes a picture inside of you.

But here is the really important thing. You can do with those pictures, taken by the camera that is you, either one of the same two things that you can do with a picture taken with a camera from the store. You can take the picture into the dark, and think about it, and develop it, and have it in your mind forever. Or you can take it and let the light in on it, and spoil it in a minute. That is a very, very important thing to know, because some pictures need to be developed and kept, and some of them need to be spoiled.

Suppose you see a boy whom you don't like at all, and the minute you see him there comes to you

a picture of you jumping on him and pounding him hard. What are you going to do with that picture? Think about it, and think how pleasant it would be, and how you wish you could, and how maybe sometime you can? Careful! You are developing a terrible picture in your mind—a picture called Hate. Stop it quick and spoil it! Let the light in! Think of something pleasant right away. If you can, find a way to do a good turn to that boy, and make yourself do it. Then the ugly picture is spoiled, and you will never have to look at it again.

Remember, you cameras, that there are pictures to keep, and pictures to spoil. You can't think too hard about the pleasant things you see. You want them for pictures to keep. But the ugly things, the things you don't want, need to be spoiled quickly—and the way to spoil them is to let the light in.

V

ANOTHER CHANCE

THIS is a story straight out of the Bible, boys and girls, about three of the first ministers who ever preached to Christian churches. There were two ministers who planned a preaching trip through several cities where no minister had ever been before. There was an elderly man named Barnabas, and a younger man named Paul. But because two men were hardly enough for the work they wanted to do, they took with them a very young man named John Mark. Those were the three—an elderly man named Barnabas, a younger man named Paul, and a very young man named John Mark.

Well, they started on their trip, and it was a hard trip. Part of the way they had to go by boat, and by not very safe boats either. In some cities people were not glad to see them, but drove them out with stones. And when the trip was just well started, and it was too late to find anybody to take his place, young John Mark decided he had had enough of it, and he went back home!

That wasn't a very brave thing, or a very thoughtful thing, or a very honest thing to do. It left the other two men in a hard situation. John Mark was

what you boys would call a quitter, and nobody likes a quitter. But listen.

Paul and Barnabas finished their trip alone and made up their minds to start on another one. Barnabas said to Paul, "Let's take John Mark again."

"Not much," said Paul. (Remember, Paul was younger than Barnabas, and young men don't always have so much patience as older ones do.) "We tried him once. That's enough."

"Yes," Barnabas said, "but I think we ought to give him another chance."

And the way it finally came out was that Paul chose another man to go with him, and went one way preaching; and Barnabas took young John Mark and went another way preaching. He believed that he would make good and was just determined to give him another chance.

And what do you suppose happened? We have to guess at some of the story, but we can guess pretty well, for we know how it came out. John Mark didn't quit a second time. He made good with Barnabas, and grew steadily in courage and ability. And after the trip with Barnabas he went on other preaching trips with other missionaries, all the time doing better and better work. And after some time Peter got him to go with him. And as Peter was growing old he wanted somebody to make a book out of the things he remembered about Jesus, so that after Peter and John and the other disciples were dead people might have it to read for all time.

And when you look in your Bibles, what is the second book in the New Testament? Mark! This same young man wrote the book for Peter, and for us, and so we have it to-day.

Just think!—*If* Barnabas hadn't given that young man another chance, we wouldn't have that story of Jesus' life! If he had thought, as Paul thought, that just because he had been a quitter once he was good for nothing, we would know very much less about Jesus than we know now. He *was* a quitter, and maybe a coward as well, but he took his other chance, and he made good.

Let's remember John Mark. Sometimes we make up our minds that some boy we know, or some girl we know, is just simply good for nothing. Perhaps you know, just *know* that a boy has stolen something. Perhaps you have told your most particular secret to a girl, and she has gone and told it. Perhaps a boy has lied to you. Perhaps a girl has turned up her nose and passed you without speaking to you. Well, those are pretty bad things, all of them. But can't you give them another chance? Can't you say to yourself, or to other people if you need to, "Yes, I know he was dishonest once, but I believe that he has learned his lesson. Let's trust him and give him a chance to make good." Or can't you think, "That was pretty bad, but maybe after all she just forgot"? Ever so many people are just waiting for a chance to make good. John Mark was, after he had done a meaner thing than any of

30 THE PORTION FOR THE CHILDREN

the people you know have ever done. Even if you are younger than Barnabas was, you can learn from him what a fine thing it is to believe in people; to forget some things and remember how many mistakes you have made, and help other people to "try, try again."

VI

"A MILE AND A BITTOCK"

LAST summer when I was in Scotland I learned a new expression that I want to pass on to you. We did a good deal of walking there, and I wish I could tell you what a beautiful country it is to walk through. The great bare hills are covered with the tiny purple blossoms of the heather. Along the roadsides are foxgloves and forget-me-nots, growing wild. There is a beautiful soft mistiness in the air. You walk on from valley to valley with your mind taking pictures that you will remember always. But that isn't what I started to tell you about.

It sometimes happened that we would meet another traveler and would ask him how far we still had to walk to the next village.

And he would answer, perhaps, "About four miles."

And then we would walk on and on at a pretty good rate, and when it seemed we were almost there we would meet another traveler and ask him the same question.

He would say, "Oh, about two miles."

We knew very well that we had walked more than two miles since last we asked the distance, and

before we reached the village we knew very well that we had walked more than four miles. And when we were talking with some people whom we met in the evening we spoke about the distances and our continual surprise at the miles that were given us. One of our new friends smiled and said, "I guess those must have been Scotch miles."

"Why, what is a Scotch mile?" we asked.

And our friend said, "A Scotch mile is a mile and a bittock."

That is quite an expression, "A mile and a bittock." A mile, that is, and a little bit more. That's worth thinking over. That bittock, that little bit more that the Scotchman adds to his mile, fits so well to so many things. There are people who know how to add that bittock.

When I was a boy I lived in country where blueberries grew, and we boys would sometimes pick berries and sell them to earn a little money. There was one friend of mine who made a special business of it. Every day throughout the season he went off to the hills picking, and then he peddled his berries from house to house. Now this is what I heard one lady say. "So-and-so gives you what you pay for, all right. When you buy a quart, you get a quart. But he is very, very careful not to give you one little bit more."

I suppose that was fair enough. Perhaps it was good business. But somehow you couldn't help feeling a little more friendly toward the boy who gave a

quart and a bittock. It wasn't just that you wanted more berries for your money. It was the spirit of the boy you were buying them from.

I've seen a good many different people practice music lessons. Sometimes I've seen a boy practice this way. He knows he must play an hour; and he is going to, just an hour. He has one eye on his music and one eye on the clock. He sighs now and then that the clock seems to be going so slowly. When the hour is up it makes no difference if he is in the very middle of a measure. He drops it quickly and is away from the piano before the clock has struck the second note of the hour. He has done his day's practicing all right, but he has been very careful not to do any more.

Here is another boy. He may not have any more musical talent, whatever that is, than the first one, but he is willing to do his hour's practicing—and a bittock. When the clock strikes, if he is in the middle of a piece, he finishes it. If there is one part in the piece that didn't go well, he takes a couple of minutes more to get his fingers used to it. Even if he runs ten minutes over the hour, he doesn't feel that any very great accident has happened. He does his work, and a bittock. I don't need to ask you which boy will sometime be the one that the other fellows crowd around to listen to.

Some people work at their jobs as if to say, “You pay me for so much of my time. You will get it, all right, and that is all you will get.” Other people

are willing to do their work—and a bittock. Some people are not worth much all the last hour of the day. They are so busy listening for the whistle to blow that they can't give more than half their attention to their work. I saw a funny picture once of two men hauling a third man up the side of a great unfinished building. They had him nearly up to the staging where they were working when the whistle blew. And one of them was saying to the other, "Five o'clock, Bill. Too bad we have to drop him." That is exaggerated, but there are people who seem to have just that feeling about their work. But the man who is willing to do his work and a bittock is the man in line for the better job.

I don't know but that it is just that extra bittock, or at least not being afraid of an extra bittock, which makes the difference between a life that is, oh, well enough; and a life that is full of joy and satisfaction. Yes, full—and a bittock.

VII

COUNTESS AND JACOB

How many of you boys and girls have ever seen an elephant? Pretty nearly all of you. I thought so. How many of you have ever seen a hippopotamus? Not quite so many, but a good many of you. I used to live near a zoo, and used to go over there as often as I could; and every time I was there I used to stop for a little visit with Countess, which was the name of the elephant, and with Jacob (only since he lived in Milwaukee his name was pronounced "Yaacob"), the big hippo. I got fairly well acquainted with them while I lived there, and here is something I noticed about them. Perhaps you have noticed the same thing.

Did you ever notice a hippo's ears? Jacob's were just little bits of cuplike things, stuck into the side of his head like the sidelights of an automobile. Except that he kept them wiggling so constantly, you would hardly notice them at all. But what sort of a mouth had he? You all know that! His mouth took up his whole head. When he opened it, as he did every now and then, you couldn't see any hippo at all but only a huge mouth. People used to stand there and pretend to have some food to toss

him, just to make him open up that enormous cavern. That was Jacob, and that's any hippo—all mouth, little ears.

But what sort of ears had Countess? You know, even if you never saw her. They were great, broad things, covering the whole side of her head. Elephants' ears are so large that I have read in a book (though I confess that I don't altogether believe it) of their being used for sledges. And how about an elephant's mouth? It is hidden away under her trunk, in folds of skin, till you can hardly find it unless she is tucking a peanut or a wisp of hay into it. That was Countess, and that is any elephant—all ears, little mouth.

Sometimes I see a boy or a girl who makes me say to myself, "There's a hippopotamus." Here is a boy who wants some help on his home work. You start in to explain an example to him, and he breaks in, "Oh, say! You ought to seen what happened at school to-day!" And he is off on a story so fast that he forgets all about the example and doesn't give you a chance to say a word about it. Here's a girl taking a music lesson, and instead of paying attention to what the teacher might have to tell her, she is talking, talking, talking, about what a lot of trouble she had with this piece, and why she couldn't practice Wednesday, and the party she went to Friday, and what her aunt said when she played for her Sunday afternoon; and the hour is used up without the teacher's having had a chance. Do you see?

Lots of talk, not much listen; plenty of mouth, not much ear. Do you wonder that they make me think of the hippopotamus?

But there are elephants, too, among humans. There are people who can talk when it is time to talk; but who know that we have two ears and only one mouth, and that it is usually safe to give *at least* twice as much work to our ears as we give to our mouth. Such people are willing to listen, and think, and learn. It isn't just that they keep still. A boy who is asleep keeps still. But they *listen*. You know they say that an elephant is the most intelligent of all animals. I don't know whether the size of his ears has anything to do with it, but I do know that the way you use your ears has a great deal to do with your wisdom now, and your wisdom when you grow up. The Bible says, "Let every man (but it is a good rule for boys and girls too) be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."

VIII

THE FROZEN RADIATOR

DID you boys and girls ever stop to think how strange it is that, when you see a car with the engine boiling like a teakettle, you say, "That fellow has had a freeze-up?"

When you want water to boil, you put it on the stove; you don't set it outdoors to freeze. When you see a tub of water turned into a solid chunk of ice, the last thing you expect it to do is to begin to boil. But when an automobile freezes up, it boils. And many times we don't know that it is frozen until we see the steam.

Some of you know the reason. The water in an automobile is meant to run around and around and around—from hot engine to cool radiator, and from cool radiator to hot engine, over and over and over again. That warms up the radiator and cools off the engine, and keeps everything running nicely. But when the water in the radiator gets cold enough to turn to solid ice, then of course it can't run; and then the water around the hot engine can't get out where it is cool, and can't get out of the way of any cooler water that might come in. The ice keeps it from moving around, from "circulating," we say;

and that means that it gets hotter than water was ever meant to get in an automobile. Not enough heat in one place—too much in another: frozen radiator—boiling engine: that's why we see so many cars steaming in this bitter cold weather.

Sometimes people in school put off studying. They loaf along doing just as little work as they can get along with, getting colder and colder on their lessons all the time; then, all of a sudden, just about this time of year, they begin to work like very steam engines. And people who don't know them say, "Dear me! What very fine students those young people must be." But we know better. We know that the reason for the steam is that they went such a long time without warming up at all. And nobody knows the cracks and the leaks in an education that come from that sort of a freeze-up.

Sometimes boys and girls let the chance to help at home get very, very cold. They leave that chance alone till, if it wasn't for some pretty strong hints from father and mother, it would get to be one solid chunk of ice. They are stone blind to things like dirty dishes on the table, or snow on the front piazza, or ashes in the furnace, or playthings scattered all over the living room. But some time or other (it may be along about the first of December) they begin to notice things, and pretty soon they are just steaming away at helping. You can hear them boiling a block away. And anybody might think, "What splendid helpers they are at home! They

must save a lot of work, year in and year out." But we know! It isn't the warm good will. It's the ice in the radiator.

Some people who believe in Christ's way of living let their loyalty to Him get very, very cold sometimes. They forget to talk to Him, to think what He would want them to do, or to go to church to worship Him. And sometimes, in danger or in trouble, they want Him very badly and very suddenly, and just boil over. I have heard of people in a storm on the ocean praying at the top of their voices. I have heard of sick people making God promises of what they would do when they got well, and then, when they did get well, forgetting all about it. They had let the ice form in the radiator, and when their religion started to work, it started to boil.

There are things, boys and girls, that you have to attend to all the time—you can't neglect them for a little while and then make it up all at once. Eating is such a thing. And helping is such a thing. And being a friend is such a thing. And telling the truth is such a thing. And loving God is such a thing.

IX

HOW NOT TO LEARN

ONCE I watched a baby trying *not* to learn to walk. He had been old enough to learn for some time. He could creep anywhere he chose. He could get all around the house by holding on to the furniture—from window sill to chair, and from chair to table, and from table to piano bench, and so on. He was strong and healthy and fifteen months old. But somehow he had taken the notion into his baby head that walking was going to be terribly hard, and terribly dangerous, and that he couldn't learn. Sometimes his mother or his father (yes, you guessed it, that was I) would take his hand, and then he would walk splendidly, for a baby, that is. But when anyone would lead him out away from the furniture, and then let go his hand, he knew just what to do—he sat down plump in the middle of the floor. Holding on a chair, yes, holding on your hand, yes, but out by himself, no siree! And he knew perfectly well how not to. Just sit down, that was the way! You couldn't teach him to walk sitting down. No sir!

And so it went for some time. But it happened one day, as it happens some day with every baby,

that out in the middle of the floor, when mother let go his hand, he *forgot to sit down*. And when he found himself standing there, he wanted to go over to the table. And the quickest way to get there was to walk. And before he realized it, he walked. And then it was done. He had learned, and there was no unlearning. But so long as he remembered his rule, he couldn't learn, and nobody could teach him.

And from that lesson, I can tell you how *not* to learn anything you choose. For instance, I can tell you exactly how not to learn anything in school. Just sit in your seat with your book closed! Or if the teacher makes you open it, as probably she will, don't look at it. Draw pictures, play with your knife or your pencil, look out of the window, study the clock face, but don't look at your book! Just remember that, and you won't learn. The teacher can't make you, however hard she may try. To be sure, you will probably have to stay after school, and you certainly will not be promoted, but if you want *not* to learn, that's the way.

Or I can tell you how not to learn to swim next summer. Go down to the edge of the lake in your bathing suit, and just dip your toe in the water. After a while, go in almost up to your knees, but be careful. If anybody splashes you, or reaches for your hand, or coaxes you to come out where it is deeper, scream and run. Perhaps it would be safer still not to put on your bathing suit at all, then you would be sure not to forget the way. But if you are

careful to remember the way, even with your bathing suit on, you'll not learn.

And then, here is a good way not to learn to play the piano. (I know; I tried it when I was a boy.) Put off your practicing till bedtime, if you can—maybe mother will forget to make you. But if she doesn't forget, and you have to sit at the piano stool, take lots of time to find your place, play over the piece you had last spring several times, pick out some airs in the back of the book with one finger, but don't try your lesson. You might possibly learn it.

If you want not to learn, don't try! Sit down, plump, on the floor, and stay there. So long as you are sitting down, nobody living can teach you how to walk. So long as you aren't trying to learn, nobody can teach you anything. But maybe you don't want *not* to learn. Maybe you would like to be promoted at the end of the term, or to learn to swim next summer, or to learn how to play the piano, or violin, or cornet. Well, that is different. And perhaps from the lesson on how *not* to learn, you can figure out for yourselves the way to learn if you want to.

X

WOODCHUCK HOLES

TO-MORROW is Ground Hog Day—the day when the ground hog comes out of his hole to see whether he can see his shadow. This has set me thinking about ground hogs—only we used to call them woodchucks where I grew up, and what fun I used to have hunting them when I was a boy! And although I wouldn't take a woodchuck's word as to what sort of winter we are going to have between now and April, they are very interesting little animals for all that, and I've been wondering whether you would like to hear something about them this morning.

There are ever so many of them in Vermont where I grew up. I've shot woodchucks, and caught them in traps, and shot boxes and boxes of cartridges at woodchucks that I didn't hit. We boys all tried every way we knew to kill all the woodchucks we could, and the farmers were very, very glad to have us. And what was the reason? Are they good to eat? Not a bit. Well, perhaps they kill chickens, like foxes, or skunks, or weasels? No, they never touch chickens. They never eat any meat. Then do they steal corn like crows or gophers? No, or at least not very much. They eat mostly grass, and

what grass they eat could easily be spared. What is the reason, then, that they are so unpopular?

I'll tell you. It is just because of the holes they dig. You know that they live in holes. But did you ever think what it means on a farm to have the fields all dug full of them? You go along driving a team of horses hitched to a mowing machine or horse rake or hay wagon, and all at once down goes a horse's leg, and his body pitches forward, and crack! goes the bone, broken. And there is a fine horse spoiled. You can't mend a horse's leg as you can a man's. You just have to put him out of his misery. Those woodchuck holes are just so many traps all over a farm. You can't see them, especially when the grass is tall, until you are right on top of them; but if you step in, you can very easily break a leg. Do you wonder that farmers wish that every woodchuck in the country, even the one that comes out on Candlemas Day, were dead?

There aren't so many woodchucks around here, but there are woodchuck holes, or things just as bad. There are places, I mean, which you can not see unless you are looking for them, and yet if you step into them, down you go.

John wanted an Eversharp pencil more than anything else he could think of. It seemed to him that home work would be fun, that even arithmetic would be easy, if only he had an Eversharp to do it with. Bill had one. And sometimes when John should have been working, he was watching Bill, and wish-

ing. Now one day, walking home from school, John saw something shining in the snow beside the walk. He picked it up, and sure enough it was a genuine Eversharp. He looked ahead, and there was Bill, swinging his books in his hand. John, without stopping to think, popped the pencil into his pocket. Of course he didn't *know* it was Bill's. He kept saying to himself, "Finding's having," and when he thought of Bill, well, he just wouldn't think. Next day Bill was telling the boys that he had lost his pencil. John didn't say anything. He didn't *know* that the one he had found was Bill's. And then it came over him what he had done. He had **STOLEN** a pencil. There was that big woodchuck hole marked **THIEF**, and he had stepped right into it.

Mary was in a hurry to go skating one Saturday morning. Her mother asked her to dust the front room first. It seemed a pity to spend so much of the morning on so tedious a job; and when the top of the table and the **front of the Victrola** and the front legs of the chairs were done, she put up the dust cloth and put on her coat. "Have you finished dusting?" mother called from the kitchen. "Yes, mother," she said almost before she thought, and off to the lake she went. But all the way, and all the time she was skating, the thought hurt like a broken leg, "You lied! You lied! You lied to your mother!" There was the woodchuck hole, and she had tumbled right into it.

Look out for them, boys and girls. Better have

your eyes open all the time. Broken legs hurt, and broken consciences hurt worse. But after all you are better off than a poor horse—for you can go back to the place where you made the stumble, and you can speak up, brave and true, and take whatever medicine you need to take. Maybe that will hurt like *setting* a broken leg. But you can mend it, and you can make up your mind not to stumble there again.

XI

THE THREE HARDEST WORDS

I WANT to talk to you to-day about the three hardest words to say in all the English language. Now don't try to think of great, long words like "incomprehensibility" or "radioactivity." For the longest of the three has only five letters. And don't try to think of words that many people mispronounce like "pianist," which some people insist on calling "peonist" as if it meant a man who grows peonies; or "program," which some people try to turn into "progrm"; for of these three words each one by itself is quite easy to pronounce and to pronounce correctly. The three hardest words in the language to say are "I—was—wrong."

Two boys are going down the street together. Says one, "No school next Wednesday!"

"Why not?" says the other.

"Washington's Birthday, of course," says the first.

"You're crazy," says the other, "Washington's Birthday's Thursday."

"'Tis not. It's Wednesday.

"It's Thursday."

"It's Wednesday."

"Bet you ten million dollars it's Thursday."

"Bet you sixteen hundred million dollars it's Wednesday."

And so they go on till they meet somebody who can settle it. And what does the boy who is right say? "There! Didn't I tell you so?" And what does the boy who was wrong say? Well, maybe he says, "You're right. I was wrong." But he is a good deal likelier to say, "Aw, forget it!"

Sometimes there has been a real fight on the school grounds. And the two people who were mixed up in it are called in to see the principal of the school. How easy it is at such a time to say, "He began it," or "It was his fault." But how hard it is to say, "I was wrong."

Sometimes friends stop being friends for years at a time. I hope none of you ever will, but it does happen. And both friends want to make up. And either of them would do almost anything to make up. But somehow neither can quite say those three hardest words, and so they just go on not being friends. You can't make up a quarrel so long as both people are saying, "I know I was right." But just as soon as either one can say those three hardest words, then the other very probably can, and the quarrel is over.

There was once an editor of a great newspaper who was bitterly opposed to Abraham Lincoln. He said the worst things about Lincoln that he could think of, and that was plenty. But by and by he

began to see what everybody in America has now come to see, that Lincoln was the finest type of American we have ever put in a high position. And then this editor did what proved him to be a great man himself. For he publicly said in his paper, "I was wrong."

It is too bad that the words are so hard to say, since so much depends on saying them. They can stop a quarrel before it is started, they can make the best of a bad situation, they can save no end of wasted effort, they can make friendships or keep friendships, they can even prevent wars between nations. It takes real courage to say them, and real character. Let's see if we can be big enough to say them when they are true.

XII

THE CHERRY TREE STORY

I'M going to tell you a story this morning which some of you may possibly have heard. I'll start it, and if any of you know the story, just raise your hands, and I won't waste time finishing it.

When George Washington was a small boy, his father gave him a hatchet. Now it happened that his father had a cherry tree of which he was very fond, and when George first went out with his new hatchet . . . What's that? Oh! You know that story? Well, I thought that maybe you did.

But let me ask you this: how many of you believe that story? Not many of you. And I'm afraid I don't either. The cherry tree story has been told many, many times; but men who study history say that there is no evidence that it ever happened—that it started with a well-meaning old minister who very much admired George Washington, but who was not always as careful as ministers and other people ought to be to see that what he said was true.

So the cherry tree story is all nonsense? Hold on, I didn't say that! The story probably isn't true,

but even without being true, it tells us a good deal about George Washington. For did you ever think of this? That story could never have been told and believed so long if there hadn't been something about Washington that made people think he was that sort of a man. Do you see what I mean? Probably George never cut down his father's cherry tree with his little hatchet, but people knew George Washington for the sort of man who would have told the truth, whatever he might have done, and whatever it might have cost him. And that counts for a great deal.

It is a great thing to act all the time so that people will naturally believe good things about you, and doubt bad things. There was a dreadful day at school one day. Somebody had taken some money from a pocket in the cloak room, during the noon hour. And after the teachers had talked it over, they decided that there were only about five pupils who could possibly have been in the building when it had happened. And those five were called, one by one, to the principal's office. But there was this difference. Number one, and two, and three stepped out of the office almost as soon as they had stepped in. Number four was there longer. And number five was there longer still. What was the reason?

This was it. Number one, and two, and three the principal *knew*. When one of those pupils came into the office, this is all that was said:

"Jack, there was some money stolen in the corridor of the school yesterday. Do you know anything about it?"

"No, ma'am."

"Thank you, Jack, that was all."

But when Harry was called in, the teacher went at it very differently. It was more like this:

"What time did you get to school yesterday noon? . . . Did you go right to the school room? . . . Was there anyone in the corridor when you came in? . . . What did you do first when you came into the schoolroom? . . . What did you do then? . . . What book was it that you read? . . . Did anyone come in while you were at your desk? . . . Was the door into the corridor open or shut?" And so on, and so on, questions and more questions, questions to see where he had been every minute of that noon hour, questions over again to see whether he gave the same answer twice, questions that weren't pleasant to ask nor comfortable to answer.

Now all the while Harry was every bit as innocent as Jack. *But Jack had always told the truth, and Harry had not.* And so they took Jack's word without another question, but Harry's had to be sifted.

It is just so at examinations. One desk is watched while another is never looked at. It is just so in business. One man's word is good for more than another man's whole business. It is just so every day. A group of men are talking about a

report they have heard. Somebody asks, "Who said so?"

"Thompson."

"Oh, well. Maybe so, but I wouldn't worry too much."

"But Robinson said so, too."

"Oh, did he? Well, it's so, then."

People say it doesn't matter so much what people think of you, that it is what you really are that counts. That's true, but it is also true that in the long run there isn't much difference between those two things. As Lincoln said, you can't fool all of the people all of the time. The man who always tells the truth will sooner or later be known as a man who always tells the truth. George Washington probably never chopped down a cherry tree with his little hatchet. But George Washington never told an easy lie instead of a hard truth! And though we cannot be Washingtons, we can be the sort of people about whom such a story as the one about the cherry tree would be believed if it ever were told.

XIII

THE ORCHESTRA

DID you ever hear a really big orchestra? Here in front is a big group of violins and cellos, farther back stand the men with the bass viols, over in this corner are the trombones and trumpets and horns, over in the other corner are the big drums, somewhere in between them the flutes and clarinets; sometimes there are a hundred or more people, with fifteen or twenty different kinds of instruments. But when the conductor steps up on the little platform in front and lifts his stick, just *one* sound swells up from them all. They watch that leader, each one knows exactly when his part comes in, each one does just his part, at just his time, and so they make music.

Suppose the trombone player should think, "What's the matter with that leader? That's too slow. I'll show him!" and then should begin to hurry up ahead of the rest.

Suppose the cornet player should say to himself, "I don't like my part in that number a bit. I'll just play the violin part."

Suppose the flute player should decide, "I'm tired, they can do without me this time." Or sup-

pose that the bass drummer should say, "They don't pay enough attention to me. I'll just give a few extra booms on my own account." Or suppose that any instrument should start off on its own way. What would happen? Why, the music would be spoiled. An orchestra depends on every instrument doing just what is asked of it at just the time it is asked. They mustn't try to show off—they mustn't get tired. They mustn't try to go off on their own and try to have their own way. Now and then they do try, and then it isn't music, it is noise.

Did you ever hear anybody say, "I'm not going to play second fiddle to anybody"? That means that he wants first place, and first importance, and credit for it. But where would an orchestra be without second fiddles? They are every bit as important as first fiddles. A selection without second fiddles would sound like a piece played on the piano with one finger.

Your class was giving a play once. You read the play over, and though you didn't tell anybody, you made up your mind that you would be a pretty good actor for that leading part. You could just see yourself speaking those lines and going through that action. And then the coach gave you a little measly part with only half a dozen lines to it. How did you take it? Did you sulk, and complain and miss rehearsals; or did you care more for the play than for yourself, and make your part fit in to the whole just as perfectly as you could?

You like to pitch baseball. You know in your heart that you can do it—well, just as well as anyone on the team. How did you act when the captain told you to play right field? Did you kick, and storm, and threaten to quit; or did you play the game for all there was in you, for the sake of the whole team?

You don't enjoy doing dishes. But if you are to do them, you would a whole lot rather work with the best china—those lovely, thin cups and saucers through which the light shines when you hold them up. How did you behave the other day when mother asked you to do the pots and pans instead? Did you bang them around and try your best to make mother wish she hadn't asked you; or did you see to it that those pots and pans were just as well done as if they were the most fragile china?

An orchestra is like a ball game, or a family, or a church, or a picnic, or pretty nearly anything where people do things together. It depends upon every member being willing to do his part, not shirking, not envying the next one, not trying to make a show. It is the music that counts. And you can't make music if you are thinking too much about yourself.

XIV

MINDING ONESELF

THERE is one thing, boys and girls, of which you may be absolutely sure—everybody has to mind somebody. It begins with the very beginning of life. A baby has to mind his mother. As soon as he goes to school, he has to mind the teacher. When he can go to the playground, he has to mind the director. When he plays with the other boys and girls he finds that in any game there is a whole set of rules that he has to mind if there is to be any fun in the game. Sometimes he is in a hurry to get through school just because he thinks that in that way he can get out of minding people, that he can be, as he puts it, “his own boss.” But just as soon as he gets to work there is more minding to do. He has to mind the foreman; and when he gets to be foreman, he has to mind the boss next higher up; and if he gets to be that boss, he finds that there is a boss still higher to mind. And even if he gets to be the very highest man in all the company, he finds that there are more people to mind than ever. He has to mind the rules of the best way to run a business; he has to mind the laws of the state he is in; he has to mind the wishes of all the different people

for whom he is making things, or to whom he is selling things; or else his business won't last very long. Yes, and even if he has minded all these things, and has built up a splendid business and has made so much money that he is ready to retire and work no more for the rest of his life, even then he has to mind—the doctor!

It is a very valuable thing to learn to mind, and a very pitiful thing not to learn. What sort of time does the child have in school who hasn't learned to mind at home? You know very well that he has very little fun and makes very few friends. How welcome in a baseball game is the boy who won't mind the rules? You don't want him on your team, and you don't want him on the team that you play against. And the man who is always looking forward to the time when he will not have to mind has a most miserable time of it. For life is just one long succession of minding—mother, teacher, umpire, boss, policeman—and the surest way to be miserable is just to fight, fight, fight against it all the time, getting beaten all the time, and losing all the fun that you might be having into the bargain.

But there is one way out of it, and only one. There is one lesson that saves you all the trouble; one kind of minding that you can learn right now if you haven't learned it already, that you can take with you through all the other minding lessons that life has for you. And to help you understand

what it is, I want to tell you a story that somebody told me.

A little girl had been left alone in the sitting room, and there was a dish of candy on the table. And she knew that she wasn't supposed to have any. Now her mother was in the next room watching, though the little girl did not know it, and this is what the mother saw. She walked up to the table, and looked at the dish a long time, with her hands behind her. Bye and bye a hand stole out from behind her back and slowly went up toward the dish, and stopped half way, and came back. And still she stood there. And again her hand came up, and started to reach out toward the dish, and came back. And still she stood there. And finally she drew a long breath, and turned around, and marched out of the room. And then her mother called her, and told her that she had seen her, and asked her how she had managed to do so well. And the little girl said, with a glint in her eye, "I said, 'No,' to me, and I made me mind me!"

She had learned! And anyone who has learned that lesson is saved no end of trouble. At school there is no trouble about the teacher because you aren't minding the teacher, you're minding yourself. In games there is no quarrel with the umpire, because you are making yourself follow the rules. When you are older the traffic policeman doesn't bother you, because you make yourself obey the

regulations. The man who, through life, makes himself mind himself gets on splendidly.

Boys and girls, learn now! Say, "No!" (or "Yes!") to yourselves, and make yourselves mind. It will save you from a great many more disagreeable bosses.

XV.

"GO TELL"

WHENEVER Jesus met one of his disciples on the first Easter day and the days just after, this is what he said. "Go tell." He wanted to be sure that people would learn about his being alive. He knew that it was going to be hard to believe. He knew that, in spite of what he had said over and over again, everybody thought that he was dead and his work was over. And he knew that it would take the help of everybody to spread the word that he was alive. So to one he said, "Go tell my disciples." And to another he said, "Go tell Peter." And finally, when all the disciples had realized that he was truly alive, he said to them, "Go into all the world and tell the good news."

On Easter Sunday we are reminded again that Jesus is alive and that he is our friend. Don't you suppose that he is saying to us too, "Go and tell people that I am alive; go and make them understand what Easter means."

We can't do it just as his first disciples did. If you should go down the street to-day saying to everybody you know, "Christ is risen," they wouldn't understand you. The first one you said it to would

think you were joking; and the next one would say, "Why, of course, didn't you think I knew that?" and the next one would say, "Why, I knew that years before you were born." You see, people in America don't need to be told nowadays. But they need to be shown. A good many people who have heard about Easter over and over again are living just as though they had never heard of it. They don't need to hear again. They just need to see somebody and somebody else and a whole city full of somebodies, living as if Christ were alive. And if you feel the joy of Easter, the thing for you to do is to let people see, without your telling them, that Jesus is alive.

The way to do that is just to live the Jesus kind of life. It is just to be kind and helpful and honest. Here are some of the chances that you may get to tell people about the Easter message. Maybe on the way home from church to-day somebody will play a mean trick on you and think it is a joke. Or if it doesn't happen to-day, it is sure to happen some day, because it is very hard for some people to understand the difference between fun and meanness. But suppose that when it happens, instead of losing your temper and flying at the joker with your fists or answering him back with your tongue, you shut your lips together tight and take a long breath and smile. That says plainer than any words, "Jesus Christ is alive. I am doing the sort of thing he wants me to."

Or perhaps there is a big Easter dinner at your house to-day, and after dinner it is lots of fun to sit in the front room and read or visit, and it is even more fun to start out for a walk in the spring sun that has just started to shine. But there are those loads and loads of dishes, and mother tired, and nobody remembering to help. Suppose you forget about your story and the walk, and slip out into the kitchen (no, boys, I am not talking just to the girls) and, not *ask* mother if she wants any help, but find a dish towel and begin. Maybe mother is so busy getting dinner that she isn't in church to-day, and so flustered about a lot of things that she has forgotten about the Easter story, but she will remember it all right if you do that. For you are saying without words, "Jesus is alive and I am doing his sort of work."

If Easter means picture cards and eggs and rabbits and hats, there isn't much use in keeping Easter; but if Easter means that Jesus is alive in your heart, it may be the greatest day in the year. If you have found out that Jesus is alive, show people.

XVI

THE ROLLER SKATES

WHY is roller skating so much more fun than walking? Roller skates don't go of themselves—they aren't automobiles. The only power to run them is the muscles in our own legs—the same legs that we walk with. If we go on our roller skates to school, we have just as many blocks to go as if we were walking, and the blocks are just as long, and the hills are just as high. But it seems twice as easy. What is the difference?

This is the most of the difference. Roller skates take the rub out of the going. If you tried to slide your feet along the sidewalk it would be the hardest work you ever did, not to mention what it would do to your shoes. And if you have to walk you have to lift yourself up and set yourself down again with every step you take. You do, really. See, you step on this foot, and lift yourself up, and then step on this foot, and you lift yourself up; and some of you people are getting good and heavy to lift. But your skates slide. The wheels turn on a smooth, oiled bearing, and you can thrust your body along, one stroke, and then another stroke, till it seems to go of itself.

It is great fun to roller skate. I hope you will be able to try it some time if you haven't already. But it is particularly good to remember what a difference it makes in going when you take the rub out. Some people have a perfectly miserable time in the world because they are rubbing all the time. A girl says, "I can't stand so-and-so."

"Why not?" you ask her.

"Oh, she rubs me the wrong way!"

"I hate school," a boy says.

"Why," you ask him, "don't you have good times there?"

"Oh, yes," he says, "but it is such a grind!" (A grind, you know, is just a very hard rub.)

"How is business?" you ask a man.

"Oh," he says, "a good many rubs to it."

There are lots of things that rub, and rub hard. A person you don't like is a rub, or a piece of work that you don't like, or a good time that you have to miss, or some new thing that you want and can't have (maybe a pair of roller skates, at that!)—life is as full of rubs as a cement sidewalk or a gravel road. Wouldn't it be fine if we had a pair of roller skates to help us slide smoothly over *those* rubs!

Well, there is a pretty good pair, and this is what they are called—"Making the Best of Things." Suppose that the rub is a boy or a girl you don't like who lives next door to you, or sits in the next seat to yours at school. If you spend your time thinking, "How I despise you! What a poor stick

you are!" the rub rubs worse and worse. But if you go to work to find something really worth liking in your companion, before so very long you will find him a friend.

Or if the rub is a piece of work, "Making the Best of Things" means just forgetting that you hate it and throwing yourself into it. Or if the rub is something that you can't have, "Making the Best of Things" means remembering all the things that you *do* have. It works with the other rubs of life too. And with the rubs gone, the work of life seems to go of itself.

XVII

THE FIRST ROBIN

I SAW a robin yesterday—the first one of the year. I know some people have seen some earlier. I saw something about it in the paper. But this was the first one that I have seen, and a robin in the back yard is worth two in the paper.

Can anybody see his first robin of the year without a thrill going through him? This fellow looked finer, I think, than any robin I ever saw before. He told me that this winter, that began away before Thanksgiving Day and has lasted on and on long beyond the time when any well behaved winter would have been on its way north, is really over now. It may look back at us once or twice. We'll have our snow flurries and our cold days. But the spring is coming. It is really coming, for the robin is here to tell us.

No wonder we love robins. We have far better songbirds and far more beautiful birds, but here is the thing that gives the robin his popularity—he dares come first! While the other birds are wondering whether to start and lingering for just a few weeks more of southern sunshine, the robin is on the way. He doesn't mind a few days of winter. He

doesn't wait for going north to be fashionable. He has courage enough to be a pioneer. And so it is that when we see him we think of all the things that are coming—the warblers and wrens, the green lawns and green leaves, the gardens and rose bushes, and all the other things that spring brings to us; and we feel like thanking the robin for all of them.

It is a great thing *to dare be first*. Anybody can be brave when everybody else is being brave, but it takes real courage to lead off, whether it is a season in the year or a group of boys and girls. Once a crowd of girls had their heads together talking about—guess! Yes, they were talking about a girl who wasn't there, and they weren't saying very nice things either. They talked about the way she did her hair, and the dress she wore, and the mistake she made in class the day before, and a lot more things that I wouldn't repeat even if I had overheard them. But all of a sudden one girl spoke up, "I don't care, she is the most generous girl that I know!" And then, what do you think? Just because one girl was brave enough to start, the others looked rather ashamed of themselves, and pretty soon they were talking about the good points of this girl—and strange as it may seem, they found quite as many good ones as they had found bad ones before.

There was once a group of boys who had heard older boys swear, and made up their minds that it was really grown up to learn. It wasn't nearly so

much fun as they had thought it would be. And they were always afraid they would be overheard by somebody they didn't want to have hear them. But every boy was afraid that if he should stop, the others would think him a sissy. Finally one boy had courage enough to say, "Fellows, I'm done." And the minute he said it, another spoke up, "So'm I." And right there the gang decided to stop.

Yes, it takes courage to be the first! It takes courage, too, for a bird to come up into the sort of weather we have been having for a week. But the birds we love, and the people we admire, are those who have just that sort of courage.

XVIII

TWO COUSINS

How many of you have seen a robin this year? How many of you have seen a song sparrow? How many of you are sure that you know a song sparrow when you see one? I haven't seen one this year, but I feel very sure that they are here by now. They are among the first comers in the spring and among our sweetest singers, some people say our very sweetest. They are handsome too. If you don't know them, you must get acquainted with them this very spring.

But how many of you know the English sparrow? Everybody! And everybody wishes he didn't. The English sparrow is the dirtiest, noisiest, most quarrelsome bird that we have. Some cities have gone systematically to work to drive them out. I wish that our city would. It would mean just so many more song birds living and nesting among us.

But here is the strange thing. Those two birds—the beautiful song sparrow and the hateful English sparrow—are cousins; at least they are second cousins. They belong to the same family. Far enough back they had the same ancestors. The bird that we love among the best of all our birds

and the one that we would do away with altogether if we could, started out just alike. What made the difference?

Let us use our imagination a little. Imagine two sparrows just alike. Then suppose that one of them, as he grew his pin feathers and his other feathers, took to hanging around curbings and street corners and livery stables. Suppose that he picked his food from gutters and garbage cans. And suppose that meanwhile the other was working honestly for his food, going up and down hedge rows and meadows, cleaning up weed seeds. Suppose that the first sparrow lived in dust and smoke and didn't bother to take a bath when he had a chance, while the other sparrow lived in the clean country air and kept his feathers and skin as clean as a bird can. Suppose that the first sparrow hung around in crowds, picking on other birds, quarreling, raising his voice higher and higher to be heard above the rattle of trucks and coasters and coal wagons. And suppose the other sparrow was up early in the beautiful spring morning, pouring out his song to the sunrise.

Could anything else happen than just the thing that has happened to the English sparrow and the song sparrow? One has grown dirtier and dirtier, and noisier and noisier, and more and more quarrelsome, and has come to be just a nuisance. The other has grown finer and finer to look at, and to listen to—a bird we watch for in the spring and listen for all through the summer.

Boys and girls, you have the best sort of start in life. But remember that what you do with that start depends on yourselves. If you want to be an English sparrow, hanging around garbage and gutters (which means pool rooms and dance halls and loafing places) looking for easy picking instead of honest work, I don't know of anything that will stop you. But if you want to be a song sparrow, busy, cheerful, doing your work well and making it easy for others to do theirs, you have the start you need. Go ahead!

XIX

THE STORY OF JOHN LOUDEN MCADAM

Boys and girls, I want to tell you a story to-day. I wish I could tell you that it is a true story, and it may possibly be, but thus far I have not been able to discover that it is. I am going to tell it to you anyway because it is exactly the sort of story that actually does happen over and over again.

Once upon a time there lived in Scotland a man by the name of John Louden McAdam. And like many Scotchmen this man was very much interested in his ancestors. Indeed, he had started to write a history of the McAdam family that was to go clear back to old Father Adam himself. It seemed to Mr. McAdam that this was the most important thing in the world. He wanted to give all his time and all his mind to it. But one day a committee of neighbors called on him about the road that ran through his property. They told him that it was the worst stretch of road in all Scotland, and that was saying a good deal in those days. They said he really must put it in better condition. He didn't like it. He didn't want to be interrupted in this tremendously important thing that he was doing. And he made up his mind that he wasn't going to be interrupted again just to make a road. He would

make them a road that would last. So he had the clay hauled off the road. He went down good and deep. He hauled in crushed rock and finer rock on top of that. He rolled it down well, and bound the surface with water, and said to himself, "There, I guess that will last long enough to give me a chance at my history."

And it did. It lasted a great deal longer than that. People began to hear of that road all over Scotland. They began to build roads like it in other parts of the country and in other countries. And here is the strange thing. Nobody knows whether Mr. McAdam ever finished his history of the McAdam family, or not, and nobody cares. But everybody knows what macadam road is!

Now, as I said, I don't know whether that story is true. But whether it is or not, it is the sort of thing which happens over and over again to everybody. Over and over again the thing you think is important turns out to be nothing much after all, and the thing you just hated for taking up your time turns out to be the biggest thing in the day, or perhaps the biggest thing in your life. And the reason I told you this story is that you are not a bit too young to be learning the lesson.

Suppose that one of you girls is as busy as can be with a committee about some school affair. And along comes your little sister crying as if her heart was broken. She wants her big sister dreadfully. You can't bear to leave your work, but you feel as

if you must, and off you go to comfort her. And somehow after a day or two, when the committee has reported and the work is all done, doesn't it seem as if the love and confidence that you see in little sister toward you is the big thing after all?

Suppose one of you boys is fixing up a radio set some Saturday. You won't have another whole day to give to it till next Saturday, and you must work fast. In comes mother, with a worried look. She says, "Bill, I hate awfully to interrupt you, but I just must send to the store before dinner. I can't go, because I have a cake in the oven, and there is nobody to send but you." You look at the radio and you are just ready to snap out the nastiest remark you dare make, but you think it over, and you make yourself like it, and you answer back cheerfully, "All right, what shall I get for you?" Along that night when you have gone to bed, which honestly seems more important, the radio set or the way the worried look left your mother's face?

It is important for you to learn that lesson carefully because you will need it more and more the longer you live. The time comes when it seems to you as though every day were just one long series of interruptions from morning till night, with the work you are supposed to do crowded clear out of sight. You will need to remember that nobody can ever tell till long afterward what really is important, but that it is pretty safe to spend time helping people who need your help.

XX

THE FOUR T'S—TEMPER

FOR four Sunday mornings I want to talk to you about four T's. You've all heard about the three R's, "reading, riting, and 'rithmetic." Well, the four T's are quite as important as the three R's. And the first of the four T's is Temper.

I don't suppose I need to explain to any one what Temper is. Most of us know all too well. A boy was working with his tool chest, making a box. He had it almost done. But as he was nailing on one board that he was very particular about, the board split right off where he was driving the nail. It was too bad. The board was spoiled for the use he wanted to make of it. But he might easily have found another and gone on with his work. But this is what he did. He looked down at the box for a couple of seconds. His face got red, and then white, and he gave his box a terrible kick. He hurt his toe. A worse look came on his face. He picked up the box, lifted it high above his head, and slammed it on the floor with all his might. Some of the boards split. The nails gave way. All his work was spoiled. He didn't say a word, but jumped with all his might on what was left of it. And then he flung himself

out of the basement and slammed the door after him. What was the trouble? You say, "He lost his Temper."

A girl was on her way to school. A larger boy, in running past her, for no reason in the world gave her a shove that knocked the books out of her arms and almost made her fall down. It was a thoroughly mean trick. Anyone seeing it would have had a very small opinion of that boy. But, dear me, you should have seen the girl. She screamed. She stamped her feet. You couldn't exactly say she was crying. The noise that she was making was too loud to be called that. Her voice was so high and the words came so fast that you couldn't understand what she was saying, and when she had quieted a bit so that you could make out her words, you were glad that you hadn't been able to understand them before. And people who heard her, who had started by being sorry at the trick that had been played on her, were sorrier still to see her make such an exhibition of herself. She had lost her Temper.

Now notice that in both these cases the trouble was that Temper was *lost*. Temper is a very fine thing to have, but a very bad thing to lose. Sometimes I hear a boy say, "Oh, dear! I don't know what to do. I have such a Temper." I always feel like telling him that I congratulate him. A boy or a girl without a Temper is a boy or a girl to feel sorry for. You need Temper. Temper is the steam

in the boiler of an engine. It is the force that keeps you going. It is the thing that makes you jump all the harder into a piece of work if it is hard. It helps you set your teeth and walk right ahead when you are afraid. It makes you play all the harder when the score is against you. Temper isn't a thing to be sorry about. It is a thing to be thankful for.

Only you must keep it. It is a thing much too valuable to lose. And when you lose it, it is just as dangerous as it is valuable when you keep it. We said it is like the steam in the boiler. The steam in the boiler drives the engine over the tracks, but when the steam gets beyond control, it can burst the boiler and shatter the engine and wreck the train and kill everyone within range of the explosion. It is the same way with Temper. Temper kept where it belongs is one of the most valuable things you have. Temper that gets out of control is terrible.

That is the thing to remember about Temper. I don't need to ask you if you have it. I know you have. Be glad of it. You need it. But remember you can't spare a bit of it. When it comes climbing up to your lips trying to get away from you in the form of sharp words, shut your lips tight. When it creeps down into your hands and makes them want to double up into fists, or makes them want to pick something up and throw it; give them some work to do, and make the Temper drive them at the work. When it goes down into your feet and makes you want to stamp or kick, hold tight; work harder

80 THE PORTION FOR THE CHILDREN

than ever. The Bible says, "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city." The boy or girl who learns to control his Temper can control a good many other things as he makes his Temper work for him.

XXI

THE FOUR T'S—TONGUE

REMEMBER, boys and girls, I told you I was going to speak for four Sundays about four T's? Before I tell you what the second T is, I am going to ask you a question. Perhaps it is a sort of a riddle. What is the most untamable thing mentioned in the Bible? When you have guessed that, you have guessed the second T.

Is it a lion? There are lots of them in the Bible. Samson and David and Daniel and many other people met with them. But the Bible says there is something harder to tame than a Lion, and besides, Lion doesn't begin with T.

Is it a tiger? No, there is no tiger in the Bible. Perhaps in your mind you are going through the animals there are in the Bible—leopards, wolves, bears, or the strange, long-named ones, Leviathan or Behemoth. But you won't find the answer that way.

For this is what the Bible says: "For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the Tongue can no man tame."

There were two girls on their way home from

school, with their heads very close together and their Tongues going just as fast as fast could be. They were talking about a third girl, about her clothes, about her manners, about what she said in school, about her looks; their Tongues were running wild, wilder than lions or tigers.

There was a crowd of boys in one corner of the school yard. One boy's Tongue was getting louder and louder. "I can lick any boy of my size. I licked Bill just as easy, didn't I, fellows? Last summer I licked a boy twice as big as me. I bet I could lick a man pretty near." Ever hear anything like that? His Tongue had gone wild—it had just gotten away from him. I warrant that many and many a time it gets him into trouble.

There are so many ways for the Tongue to get out of control. And it is so hard to tame. Think of just a few of them. There are mean Tongues. When a boy is lame, or has a hare lip, or can't wear as good clothes as other people, there are Tongues mean enough to make fun of him. There are Tongues that think it clever to talk about other people's misfortunes.

Then there are crooked Tongues. You can't quite depend on what they say. When such a Tongue says, "I'll do my practicing after school," it may mean, "I hope you'll forget about it then—and if you do, I won't remind you." When such a Tongue says, "I haven't eaten any candy to-day," it may mean, "I had a few pieces, but I hope you

won't find out about it." Very hard to straighten, are those crooked Tongues.

There are dirty Tongues—and we won't say much about them. They are whining Tongues, that make their owners and everybody else miserable all the time. There are sulky Tongues, that just lie down and won't work when they ought to. How much they all need taming!

And the Bible says no man can tame the Tongue!

This is what it means, I think. I can't tame your Tongue however much I preach. Your teacher can't, however long she keeps you after school. Even your mother can't. There is only one person in the world who can tame your Tongue, and that is *yourself*. You can, if you try.

Now the way to tame a wild animal is to begin when he is young. That is your big advantage. Your Tongues are young. You can begin now, and get your Tongue to the place where it will obey you. And to-day is not a bit too early to begin.

XXII

THE FOUR T'S—TIME

As we begin talking about the third of our four T's, I have another riddle to ask you. What is it of which you have just as much as John D. Rockefeller or Henry Ford or Thomas Edison? Certainly it isn't money. I think that you will all agree with me that it isn't brains. Certainly it isn't fame. But there is something, and I think that any one of these men would say it is the most valuable thing that he has, of which you have just as much as they. It is *Time*. Yes, that is one thing of which everybody in the world has just exactly the same amount, twenty-four hours in each day, sixty minutes in each hour, sixty seconds in each minute. And how tremendously important it is to manage it. And how many people just don't!

For instance, I have heard of people who try to kill Time. Think of it. Only sixty short minutes in an hour, only twenty-four hours in a day, and they try to kill some of them.

I saw a boy once sitting by a window. It was half past four and he was just back from school. There was just one hour and a half before supper—ninety minutes with sixty seconds in each of them.

Think what he could have done with them. There was a book on the table to read. There was time for a fine walk. There was home work he might have been getting out of the way. Best of all, there were several things he might have been doing for his mother. But do you know what he was doing? Just drumming, drumming, drumming with his fingers on the window sill! "What are you doing?" I asked him.

"Oh," he said, "just killing Time."

I was in a schoolroom once. A girl sat at her desk with a book open in front of her. But she wasn't studying. She was folding pleats in her dress, and smoothing them out; folding them, and smoothing them out; folding them, and smoothing them out. There were forty-five minutes before class. Each one had just sixty seconds in it. Not one minute would ever come back once it was gone. And there she sat, killing Time.

I have seen older people, people old enough to know better, doing the same thing. I've seen people reading the fill-in-stuff in the inside pages of the newspapers—somebody's "Advice to the Lovelorn," somebody's else column on bringing up children, somebody's else "Household Hints." They didn't care a snap about what they read—they were killing Time. Or I have seen them at the radio, tuning from one station to another, and another, and another, not listening to any of them. Or I've seen them go off to the movies, not to see anything, but

just to spend an evening. That is one very poor way to treat Time.

And then there are other people who always keep *behind* Time. One morning a boy got up just about twenty minutes late. He hurried to dress, forgot to brush his hair, had to go back again to do it, and finally sat down to breakfast just as everybody else was finishing and everything was cold. He didn't have time to give his lessons that last going over that he had counted on. He hurried to school and got there just a bit late—just enough to spoil his record for the month. And the day was spoiled.

There are so many people like that—people who keep behind Time. They make all sorts of confusion for themselves and others as well. Church school is always being spoiled by such people. I can't speak about the church services because these older people might hear it. Remember that Time doesn't like to have people standing behind him. It makes him nervous. When you are behind him he hurries in the most unaccountable manner and it gets harder and harder to catch up.

And then some people try to fool Time. They try to do two things at once. They have some work to do and they try to keep their minds on the work and play at the same time. They try to study a lesson *and* read a story. They try to shovel the walk *and* snowball. But it is very, very hard to fool Time. The way to get the most out of him is to do one thing and finish it, and then do another.

But treat Time honestly, don't try to kill him, or to rush him by keeping behind him, or to fool him; and you will find him one of the best friends you know. Life is made of Time. Use Time well, and life is well used.

XXIII

THE FOUR T'S—THOUGHTS

As we come to the last of our four T's, I am not going to keep you guessing, but I shall tell you right at the start that the fourth T is *Thoughts*. Now, sometimes boys and girls get the idea that the fourth T doesn't matter much. Temper, surely they see what happens when that goes on a rampage. Tongue, yes, they know how often that gets them into trouble. Time, they can even see about that. But Thoughts are different.

The other day you were particularly busy at a game. Mother came in and asked you to do an errand for her. She couldn't wait, she said. She was sorry to interrupt you, but you would have to go right away and finish the game later. Now you didn't answer her back. You didn't slam the door. You didn't even pout. You minded all right. And what difference did it make if you did *think*, "Mean old thing! Can't you ever let me have any fun?"

There is a girl in school whom you just can't stand. You hate her looks, and the way she talks, and the way she dresses. It makes you mad just to see her sitting in her seat in front of you. You are careful not to say mean things about her. You have

never really quarreled with her. You don't throw things at her. But what harm does it do if you do *think*, "Oh, how I hate you! How I'd like to pound your face"? Nobody sees you or hears you. It doesn't do the girl any harm. Why do you need to be so careful about this fourth T?

Just because the fourth T controls all the others. There wouldn't be any Temper except as the Thoughts of anger boil up inside of us. The Tongue is never cruel or silly or unclean until cruel or silly or unclean Thoughts start it; and the Tongue isn't clean and true and brave except as Thoughts are clean and true and brave. As for Time, we use it or abuse it as we think—as we think truly and busily or idly and lazily. The Bible says, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

Mother may not hear what you think as you start on your errand in a sulky, rebellious spirit, but if you think such things some day you're going to say them. Tongue is going to follow the lead of Thoughts sooner or later. Nobody is going to know what you think about the girl in school to-day, or maybe to-morrow. But you can't go on *thinking* hate without sometime *acting* hate. Temper is getting more and more out of control, and just waiting its chance to get away from you. Unless you *think* right, you won't do anything right very long.

"Well," I hear you saying, "that's all very well, but I can't help what I think, can I?" Yes, you can. You can't help thinking, but you can help

what you think. You can't stop thinking, but you can decide what you will think about. There isn't room for more than one sort of Thoughts in your mind at one time. If the wrong kind is there, you can crowd it out with the right kind.

You see a person you dislike. You begin to think, "How I hate you! How I hate you!" You know that is wrong but you can't stop thinking. No, but you can think different Thoughts. You can think, "I wonder whether there is any way that I could help you. I wonder if I have been fair to you." And pretty soon the hateful Thoughts will be crowded clean out of your mind.

When you have an errand to do that you don't want to do at all, you may find yourself thinking, "Mean old thing! Mean old thing!" That is wrong, of course. But suppose you begin to think, "How many things mother does for me! How hard she works all the time! How glad I am that I can help her a little!" The Thoughts you are ashamed of will be pushed right out of your mind.

You can think the things you want to think. You can crowd out the things you are ashamed of. You can make your Thoughts work for you instead of against you. And as your Thoughts are, so are you.

XXIV

“ASK ME, I LIVE HERE”

I was attending a convention not long ago together with many other people. And as always happens in a strange city, I had a good many questions to ask. I didn't know the way to the Convention Hall. I had an address to look up and didn't know where the street was on which the people lived. I had a little time to myself and wanted to see the most interesting things in the city. And as I was wondering how to find the answers to my questions I noticed several people on the street wearing big, white buttons on their coats, and on those buttons were these words: "Ask me. I live here."

There I had just the thing I was looking for. Here were people inviting me to put my questions to them. All through the convention when there was anything I wanted to know—what street car to take, how far I had to walk to a meeting, where to register, how to find the post office—all I had to do was to keep my eyes open till I saw one of those buttons. Then I knew there was someone who ought to know the thing I was trying to find out.

How would you like to wear such a button? Do you know your own city well enough to say to

strangers, "Ask me"? Could you answer offhand such questions as: "Where is Bluff Street"? "How big is Janesville"? "How do I get to Milton Avenue"? "What car should I take to the Chevrolet factory"? It is pretty important to know one's own city. You realize how important it is when there are strangers asking about it.

Since I saw those buttons I have been thinking of another city. Fifteen hundred years ago a man wrote a great book which he called, *The City of God*. And do you know what he meant? The church! Not just this church, but all of them together. Not just in Janesville, or Beloit, or Milwaukee, but all over the world. All the churches together make up a great city, and he called it "The City of God."

Who lives in that city? Every man, or woman who has joined the church. Every boy or girl, baptized in the church or brought by his parents to the church school. They are citizens of the City of God. You are citizens of that city. You live there just as truly as you live in Janesville.

How would you like to wear such a button about the City of God, "Ask me, I live here"? There are many things that people want to know about this City of God—the church. Are you willing to have them ask you?

Sometimes they want to know something about the Bible. Who wrote it? How long ago did Jesus live? Were David and Goliath two of his disciples? Is the Twenty-third Psalm in the Old Testament or

the New Testament? You go to church school so that you can say, "Ask me, I live here." I hope you can.

Sometimes people want to know things about the church. What is the Communion? Why do you send missionaries to China? How does your church get its minister? Does the Bishop send him, or what? What happens at the Thursday evening meetings? How old do you have to be before you can join the church? I hope that more and more you will be able to answer such questions. You live here. Know your city.

But most of all people are asking whether church people really love Christ? Do they really try to be honest and kind and helpful? Does it really make any difference that they go to church and to church school? And, boys and girls, they are asking that question all the time of you and of me, whether we know it or not. They aren't interested in what we *tell* them. They get their answer from what we do, from the way we live. They think they see the button. At any rate they say, "He lives there. She lives there. I'll ask him. I'll watch her. Do they believe what they say they believe"? And, boys and girls (and men and women too), if you care for the City of God, remember that we live there and we answer.

XXV

ONE LAZY CYLINDER

ONE day you were riding in an automobile. The engine was going along, "Prrrrrrrrr," just as nicely as could ever be. Then all at once, probably on a hill or pulling through some sand, something went wrong. The car began to go, "Prrrp . . . prrrp . . . prrrp . . . prrrp," as if every third or fourth step it stubbed its toe. And mother said, "Whatever in the world is the matter"?

And dad said—well, perhaps we'd better not talk about what dad said! But I guess he just frowned a little, and said, "One of the cylinders isn't hitting."

You see, the engine of an automobile is made up of four (or six or eight or twelve) smaller engines that we call cylinders. If the car is to run well, every one of those cylinders must do its part. If one of them gets lazy and stops working, it gets in the way of all the others. You would think that, if you took one away from four and left three good cylinders, the car would go at least three-quarters as well as with four. But it doesn't! And when a cylinder stops working it does more than stop work-

ing; it holds back the others. As soon as it stops helping it begins to hinder. And you begin to feel that "Jerk . . . jerk . . . jerk . . . jerk" that takes all the fun out of riding.

It makes me think of what happens at home sometimes. When everybody in the family is ready to do his part, and do it at the right time, and do it cheerfully, the work just "prrrrrrrrrrrs" along like a good automobile. Rooms picked up, rugs shaken, beds made, dishes washed and wiped—one thing after another is done and done without trouble.

But suppose that just one member of the family—one cylinder of the engine—gets spunky or lazy. See what happens then. Suppose that some evening Mary decides that she is too tired to do the dishes and leaves them piled on the kitchen table. Next morning, as mother comes down to get breakfast, there they are, in her way. She has to pile them away. She has to stop to set some dishes to soaking where the food has dried on overnight. And she is late about breakfast. Father comes down stairs and breakfast isn't ready. The oatmeal is hard and the coffee is half done and he finally hurries off to work half ready for the day. Mother's morning is upset and confused. Your chores to do before school are mixed up. The whole day starts wrong because one member of the family didn't do her part.

Suppose your class is working on a play. The committees are all busy, things are getting nicely

under way and the prospects look fine. Then when the time for one important rehearsal comes, one member of the cast decides he would rather do something else; and when the others are ready to begin, he is gone. They waste half an hour waiting for him; then they go ahead as best they can. All the scenes that he is in are slowed up because somebody has to read his part in his absence. The other characters are confused and uncertain about the way to take their parts. Nobody feels just sure of whether they can depend on him for the next rehearsal. Other people begin to wonder whether it is worth their while to come every time. Instead of a thing to look forward to, the play becomes a thing to worry about and to dread.

When one person begins to shirk, you might think the work would go on; well, not quite as well as before, but pretty nearly. Not much! You can't stop helping without beginning to hinder. Let one girl or boy get lazy, and the spirit is gone from all the rest of the work. One job not done gets in the way of another. And that job gets in the way of another. All the steady, regular, pleasant "prrrrrrr" is gone from the machine.

There is a place in the Bible that puzzles some people. In one verse it says, "Bear ye one another's burdens"—that is, "Help one another." Then, just a couple of lines farther along it says, "Each man must bear his own burden"—that is, "Each man must do his own work." I don't pretend to explain

how those two verses can come right together, but perhaps this has something to do with it; the first thing toward helping the work of other people to go on smoothly and pleasantly is to make sure that our part is done, and done well, and done on time.

XXVI

THE UNDERINFLATED TIRE

THERE is one sort of shop that I always enjoy visiting, and that is a tire shop. I like to see the rows of brand new tires on the rack, each in its paper jacket, and to think how well they would look on my car if I could afford them. And I like to see the tires out in the back room where men are working on them, patching up the holes, strengthening the weak places, and getting them ready to run maybe two or three or five thousand miles more. A tire is a wonderful thing, the way it is made nowadays. Just think, we expect an ordinary tire to go as far as half way around the world before it is worn out, and some go much farther than that. But some tires don't go nearly as far as we expect them to. Sometimes in the tire shop you see one that looks pretty new with a great hole blown in it. And then you wonder. I want to tell you for the next four Sundays about four different tires and what was the matter with them.

On the table in the tire shop there lay one tire that looked almost new. The tread was clean, with sharp edges. The rubber had a fresh look about it, and I wondered why it had come back to be fixed.

I asked the man what was the matter. He pulled the tire open and pointed. There was a dark colored line all the way around the inside of the tire. "See," he said, "underinflation. That tire was driven without air enough in it. It let the weight of the car flatten it and work it back and forth and back and forth till the side wall was all broken down. It is almost new, but it is hardly worth fixing."

And I thought how many people there are just like that tire. They are spoiled by going at things too softly. Here is a boy in school. His whole idea is to get through things as easily as he can. He is always hoping that the teacher will be easy on him. He is always looking for the easiest way to get through his lessons. He grumbles all day if the arithmetic lesson is hard. Now I have never seen a boy like that who didn't hate school. Of course he hates it. There is no fun at all in school when you go at it that way. You are always behind with your work. You are always dreading each class you go to. The more easily you try to slip through, the harder work you make for yourself. Such a boy is underinflated. He carries about thirty pounds of pressure when he needs eighty. And he doesn't last any better than an underinflated tire.

Here is a girl in a church school class. She rather likes to belong. She likes the teacher. She likes the other girls. She likes the good times that the class has together. But she doesn't like to work. She

comes Sunday morning if nothing happens to prevent. But she likes to sleep late. She doesn't like to go out when it is raining, or too cold, or too hot. She likes to go off up the river if it is a particular fine day. And she doesn't get to the church school very often. As for studying her lesson, she has so much studying to do in school, and besides, she has lost her quarterly. When there's a committee appointed in the class, she really is so busy that she hasn't any time to give to it. How interesting do you think she finds her church school class? The Sunday when she does come she doesn't even know what it is all about. She has missed the thread of the lesson. She doesn't know what the committees are reporting about. She just couldn't be interested. She isn't carrying pressure enough.

The underinflated tire says, "Keep up your pressure. A thing worth doing is worth doing hard. Don't look for soft jobs, or soft lessons, or soft religion. To like a thing, you must work at it! To like it well, work hard!"

XXVII

THE STONE-BRUISED TIRE

I STARTED to tell you about four tires that I have seen in a tire shop. Last week I told you about the underinflated tire, the tire that went to pieces because it went too soft. There was another tire in the shop. This one had a big hole blown through it; and this one too, except for the hole, looked like a pretty good tire.

I said to the man, "What's the trouble here. It seems as if this ought to be just well started instead of blown out already."

"I should say it ought," he said. "That tire hasn't gone three thousand miles. It ought to be good for ten thousand at least, but it is stone bruised."

The man who had that tire on his car didn't look where he was going. One day when he was traveling at a forty or forty-five-mile clip he struck, Bang! into a stone and the poor tire had to stand it. It was new and strong, and built for hard usage; but that tremendous blow was more than any tire was ever expected to stand, and from that day on it had a weak spot. And from day to day that weak spot got weaker, till not so very long afterward out

it blew—just because somebody didn't look where he was going.

How many splendid things we spoil just that way! A girl may be helping her mother, meaning to do just her very best, and really doing splendidly; and then, along toward noon, when things are their very busiest, she goes on an errand to the grocery store. And she comes back in a great hurry and bangs the door after her! And that wakes up her baby brother, and he begins to cry, and all the work of the morning has to stop. She didn't think what she was doing.

Or here's a boy who truly means to help. There's a washing to do and he hangs it out on the line. He does a fine job, carefully as can be, but then coming back into the house he forgets to wipe his feet and he makes more work than he saved.

There is a word we hear over and over again—"I didn't mean to." There are people who think that word makes everything right. "Father, I dropped your watch and it doesn't seem to run any more, but I didn't mean to. I picked it up just to look at it and somehow or other it slipped out of my hand." "I left your book outdoors last night and I'm afraid it's spoiled, but I didn't mean to. I was reading it out on the piazza and I forgot it when I went in. Then the rain came up and soaked the cover. I didn't mean to." "I broke the big window in the living room, but I didn't mean to. We were tossing the ball around and my hand slipped and I threw

it too high and it went right through the window. But I didn't mean to." But you see, "I didn't mean to" doesn't fix the watch, or get a new book, or mend the window.

There's another word that we hear almost as often—"I didn't think." You borrowed father's fountain pen and when you were through using it you slipped it into your pocket and went off to school with it. When he needed it in a hurry it wasn't there. You had no idea of causing him any trouble. You didn't think! The other afternoon when mother was particularly anxious for you to hurry home from school and take care of the baby so that she could get out and do some important errands, you played till supper time. You didn't start out to spoil her plans. You were dreadfully sorry when you found out about it. You didn't think.

But you are live boys and girls with eyes in your heads, and brains behind those eyes, so that you *will* think, and *will* mean to. The poor tire couldn't look where it was going, but *you* can. And if you don't there's no excuse, and there's no one to blame it on but yourself. There are heedless, slam-bang ways of doing things; and there are thoughtful, watchful ways of doing things. Over and over again the slam-bang way of helping hinders more than it helps. The stone-bruised tire says, "Watch where you are going! Be careful! Think!"

XXVIII

THE TIRE OUT OF ALIGNMENT

I HAVE been telling you, you remember, about different automobile tires that I have seen. The one that I want to tell you about this morning wasn't being fixed up at all. Anybody could see that there wasn't enough left to it to fix. The man who brought it into the shop was quite vexed about it. He said, "Look here, this tire is all gone. I put it on at the same time as that other one. That other one is hardly worn at all and look at this! What sort of a tire do you call that?"

The garage man looked at the tire and then went out and looked at the car. He got down and squinted at the wheels. Then he straightened up and said, "It isn't the tire's fault. That left front wheel of yours is away out of line. It will wear out the tire you have just put on as quickly as it did the one you have just taken off. The wheel doesn't run straight on the pavement. You are not riding on that tire. You are grinding it. Take your car into the garage and have your wheels lined up."

Perhaps that is the quickest way of all to spoil a tire—have your wheel a little bit crooked. If one wheel is set ever so little aslant, the tire doesn't run

quite true on the pavement. Instead of rolling along, it drags along, just a bit. It is grinding against the road all the time. Now you know how quickly you can wear down an eraser rubbing it on a sheet of rough paper. Well, the rubber in a tire wears down in exactly the same way. A tire that will go *straight* ten, or fifteen, or even twenty thousand miles, won't go *crooked* a tenth part of that distance.

But oh, that so many people don't know it! That so many people think that they can get farther by going crooked than by going straight! I'm not thinking about tires now; I'm thinking about more important things.

There are some pupils in every school who think the shortest way to an education is a crooked way. I was talking with a teacher about one such just the other day. She said, "I don't know what I am going to do with that girl. I have tried everything that I could think of and she just can't be trusted. She cheats, and copies, and seems to have no conscience at all about it." Poor girl! She hasn't learned what a terribly wasteful way that is to travel. She has a mind, and she has the ability to work it, but instead of letting those things carry her to a real education, she wears them out—wears them out by directing them crookedly.

There are boys and girls like that at home. I heard it said once of a boy, "It would be just as easy to do the work myself as to go every time and

make sure that he's done what he said he'd do." I know of another boy who filled a wood-box by tumbling the sticks in up and down and crosswise, so they would take up lots of room, and then piled an armful on top nicely, as though the whole box were filled that way. I've seen rooms picked up just by throwing everything into a closet and shutting the door. Little things these are, maybe—but they are crooked things, and ever so little crookedness wears out a tire.

There are people who seem to think that little lies don't count—that little bits of dishonesty don't matter—that if you don't get found out about a thing you don't need to worry. But that's the way that character wears to nothing. The badly aligned tire tells us, "Go straight."

XXIX

THE TIRE THAT WASN'T USED

THERE was another tire in the tire shop one day. The man said as he saw me looking at it, "Do you want to buy a new tire cheap?"

"Why?" I said. "It looks all right."

"Yes," he said, "it looks all right, but it isn't. The man who owned it never put it on the wheels. It got too much sunshine and not any exercise, and it has just gone to pieces without giving a single mile of service."

You see, rubber needs exercise just as much as we do. If it is hung up and left alone, it gets hard and loses its elasticity and spoils. If that man had changed his tires around once in a while, had given his spare tire some work to do, it would have given him good service. The tire spoiled because it wasn't used.

I might almost stop right here. I rather think you can see the point. How well you know the times you are like the tire! What is the way you get strong bodies? You know. Exercise. Use your muscles. Take deep breaths and give your lungs something to do. Walk and run, skate and snowball. The more you do, the more you can do. Were

any of you ever sick in bed for a long time, two or three months or more? I hope not, but if you were you found when you got up that you had to learn to walk all over again. You hadn't used your legs, and they got weak. Some boys and girls have to be made to take the exercise they need. Muscles that aren't used much go soft and flabby. If they weren't used at all they would lose all their power.

What is the way to get keen, active minds? You know—work them. You know how easy it is to forget the things you've learned in school if you don't use them. Even after so short a time as a summer vacation it is hard to remember the things you knew the spring before. Have you ever had a joke on father when you asked him to help with your arithmetic and found that he had forgotten how to do some example that you are supposed to know how to do? It is just that he hasn't been practicing at it. You have to keep your minds busy if they are going to be able to work for you.

But there is one thing in particular that I want you to think about, now that we are talking of the tire that went to pieces because it wasn't used. Sometimes people seem to lose all the good from their religion. They believe in God, but they don't get any help from Him. They don't know how to pray. The Bible doesn't mean anything to them. They go to church and feel uneasy and out of place. What's the reason? Often enough the reason is simply that they haven't been using their religion.

A good while ago they found it inconvenient to come to church Sunday mornings, and they got in the habit of staying away more and more. They found that it took some energy to pray regularly, and they stopped. There was always something more exciting to read than the Bible, and the Bible got put away on the shelf and forgotten. And little by little their religion lost its hold on them. But the sad thing is that, sooner or later, the times come when such people need their faith in God, and the comfort and courage that come from prayer, and the message of the church. And it is a very sad thing if what they need most is out of their reach because they haven't been using it. Boys and girls, don't put your religion away on the shelf. Use it! Exercise it! That will prepare its strength to serve you when you need it.

XXX

LAND IS BOUND TO GROW SOMETHING

It is great to see the fields this time of year. The hay is being cut. The grain is coming on splendidly. The corn is getting its start. The pastures are green. The roadsides are beautiful. Every bit of outdoor soil is trying its best to grow something.

That's the thing I particularly want you to notice. Every bit of soil tries its best to grow *something*. Nature just can't be willing to let land lie idle. Take a roadway. You put gravel on it, and roll it down, and drive over it and over it and over it, and pound every bit of seed life out of it. Then let that road be unused for just a little while, and what happens? Here and there, between the ruts, where there is a tiny handful of dirt among the stones, up come spears of grass and flowering weeds and running vines. And if a road is unused, or little used, for a single summer, sure as sure there comes a stretch of green between the wheel tracks. Take a field and plant nothing in it, and how long does it stay empty? No time at all. By the time the corn or wheat or hay are started in the next field, dandelions and mustard and dock and thistles are already growing

in the field that was supposed to be empty. Land just insists on growing something.

And of course, if the something isn't good crop, it is likely to be bad weeds. Wheat and barley and oats and clover don't go around sowing themselves. But when you stop putting them in the ground you leave room for the thistles, whose seeds float on parachutes through the air; and the quackgrass which runs along the ground; and the burdock whose seeds get on and ride whenever a person or an animal passes their parent bush; and the other weeds that plant themselves. If you don't *help* land grow crops, it will surely grow weeds of itself.

And what's all this about? It's about you. The one thing that no one of you can possibly do is—nothing. Surely as land must be growing something, your brains and fingers and bodies just insist on being busy. You can't help it. God made you that way. But you *can* see to it that you are busy at good healthy work or play and not at the sort of meanness or mischief that springs up like weeds in an idle field.

Here is the long summer vacation. School is closed and it won't begin again till September. It isn't good for any boy or girl to study all the time. Your minds work better if they have a good, healthy rest. But resting is one thing and loafing is another. If vacation is a time of doing nothing, it is worse for you than it would be to go to school every day in the year. Indeed you *can't* do nothing. If you try

to loaf you will be spending your time growing weeds. There are thought seeds flying around all the time—mean thoughts, selfish thoughts, nasty thoughts. If they find your mind garden unoccupied, they will have a fine time sprouting and growing. Don't give them a chance.

One way to use vacation is to be of more use at home. Think of all the things mother or dad has asked you to do this spring that you haven't had time for. You have time now. And to spend time at those things is the best kind of rest from school work. You girls can be learning a lot about sewing this summer, and about cooking. You can take a great deal of the burden off mother's shoulders. You boys can be taking care of the lawn or helping in the garden. It will be good for you, good for your fathers and mothers, and it will be good fun too.

Some of you will find this vacation a chance to earn money. I know of boys and girls who have made a fine start toward their college expenses in their summer vacation times. I know of others who have been able to help a great deal with the family expenses through the jobs they have had in the months when school is closed.

And there are so many things that you can learn in the summertime. You can read—the real sort of reading, reading that you are glad to remember all your lives. You can learn things from out-of-door life—things about birds and flowers and trees.

You can take long walks, and swim, and make collections, and practice with your cameras.

But whatever you do, keep busy. Keep your mind gardens well filled with a fine, healthy growth of good hard work, and good hard play, and good wholesome reading, and good clear thinking. Then the weeds will never have a chance.

XXXI

THE LITTLE PARTRIDGES

THIS story is true. I know, for I saw part of it happen myself, and while I have to guess about the other part, I am pretty sure that I guessed pretty nearly right. Once there was a mother partridge with a family of little chicks, each about as big as my two thumbs. In the course of bringing up her family, in some way that I don't understand, the mother partridge told them this: "When I make my wings go, B-r-r-r-r-r-r, every one of you stop stock still. Don't ask why. Don't peep. Don't stir. Don't even whisper." I don't know how the mother partridge said this to her babies, but I know that in some way or another she made them understand.

Now comes the part of the story that I saw myself. One day there came a great crashing in the leaves, and a great two-legged thing came tramping through the bushes, straight toward the place where the mother partridge was with her family. There was no time to explain. The first thing the babies knew was that they heard their mother's wings go, B-r-r-r-r-r-r, and saw her fly right at the terrible two-legged thing, trying to scare it away, or

if she couldn't do that, to get it to chase her away from the place where her babies were.

And what do you think? Every one of those little partridges stopped stock still. Not one of them said, "Is this the time you meant us to stay still?" Not one of them said, "I don't want to!" Not one of them said, "I will, in just a minute." Not one of them pretended not to hear. But every one stopped perfectly still. I know, for I was there. And when a little brown partridge among the brown leaves stops perfectly still, you can't see him if he is ten feet away from you. I didn't want to hurt these little partridges, but if I had I couldn't have found them. And when other things, two-legged or four-legged, came that way, they couldn't find the partridges either.

And what is this sermon all about? Just this. Little partridges grow up to be big partridges because they mind. That's all.

XXXII

SHAVING

I AM going to talk about something this morning of particular interest to you boys. I remember when I was smaller than some of you I used to find a tremendous fascination in a razor and shaving brush. I used to look at my face very carefully in the glass to see if there weren't any signs of hairs coming. Sometimes I'd try stropping a razor and I remember that once I spoiled a razor strop doing it. And long before anybody else saw any reason for it, I was anxious to learn about shaving. Well, that is what I am going to talk about this morning. You boys can take notes on this, and you girls needn't listen.

Now the first part of shaving is stropping the razor. The more time you spend on that, the less time you have to spend on the actual shaving. There's quite a trick to it. You mustn't hold your strop too loosely. You must give your razor a sliding motion over the strop. You shouldn't press too hard or too lightly. That's the first thing. The next thing is lathering your face. There are several ways of doing that, but you must be sure to do it thoroughly; and you must be sure to have the lather

moist. It doesn't do any hurt to rub it in with your fingers, or to go over your face twice. Then wipe your hands, have your towel ready, and begin. But take your time, or else you will make trouble for yourself.

Now when the time comes for you boys to shave every day, there will be mornings when you will be in a hurry. You will say to yourself, "I guess it's sharp enough." You will slap the lather on your face and start to shave. And ouch! You will find that the razor pulls. It doesn't take the hairs off clean. And you will have to stop to wipe your razor and strop it after all. By the time your razor is ready, your face will be dry and you will have to lather it again. You will be more in a hurry than ever, and you will make a little cut on your cheek. And then you will have to stop and hunt up the alum or something to stop the bleeding. And your shave that morning will take twice the time it would have taken if you had begun right. It is the stropping and the lathering that makes shaving easy.

And even if it is a long time yet before your first shave, remember that. It is the getting ready thoroughly that makes work easy. School work ought to be more fun, and really easier, every year you go to school. High school is easier than the grades; college is easier than high school; Senior year in college is easier than Freshman year—if you are sharpened up for it. But if you have gone through sixth and seventh and eighth grades in a lazy, slip-

shod way, high school is going to be terribly hard! If you spend all your attention in high school on band and basket ball, and give only enough work to your studies to get a passing mark at the end of your course, you will think college is just impossible. Algebra is easier than arithmetic, *if* you have learned your arithmetic. If you haven't, algebra will be the worst nightmare you ever had. To the student who has really mastered algebra, geometry is easier still, and trigonometry easiest of all. But if you haven't done the work that prepares you—if the razor of your mind is dull, and the lather of preparation is dry—you'll wish you lived in the days before schools were invented.

Whatever you do depends on what you have been doing beforehand. To-day's work has a big part in to-morrow's work. Take your time getting ready, and the work you are preparing will be play when it comes.

XXXIII

THE COW AND THE BRIDGE

LET me tell you a story that a man told me the other day about a cow. This man, we will call him Mr. Smith, had started to pasture with his cow, and on his way there had to cross a bridge. As he came up the road toward the bridge, he noticed that another man was trying to make his cow cross the bridge, and that she wouldn't go. Mr. Smith tied his cow to the fence and went to help.

The other man pulled at the rope around the cow's horns, while Mr. Smith struck at her hind legs with a switch. She switched her tail and stood still. Mr. Smith pushed. She set her feet and put her head down and never moved. The other man let go the rope and they both pushed. She never budged. The man pounded her back with a big stick. She shook her head, but she never moved her feet. Finally they gave her up and Mr. Smith went back to get his own cow and lead her to pasture—and just the very minute that Mr. Smith's cow walked over the bridge, this other cow trotted right along after as quiet as you please! Two men couldn't pull her over, or push her over, or pound her over;

but just as soon as she saw another cow go over, she went of her own accord.

Did you ever know anybody as stubborn as that cow? Sometimes you find one right in your own family. I have known of small brothers or sisters who just *won't* do the things that older brothers or sisters know they should do. Sometimes it is a matter of table manners. Did you ever have a kid brother who insisted on taking big bites of food, or who always tried to talk with his mouth full? You have scowled at him and scolded him over and over again. You may not have pounded him, but you have wanted to times enough. And all your talking doesn't make one bit of difference. You don't understand how anybody could be so impolite. You wish mother would give him a lesson he would remember.

Well, it is annoying, especially annoying to brothers and sisters who have just grown old enough to know better. But suppose instead of talking and pushing and pulling, you try the method of showing. Suppose you leave the scolding to mother and spend your time giving just as fine an exhibition of the right kind of table manners as you possibly can. I could warrant that you will get a great deal farther, and that he will.

Or perhaps it is a matter of minding. Your little sister takes her own time about doing what she is told, and it annoys you very much. You have spoken to her dozens of times about it. You have

even given her a shake sometimes. And the more you talk the more she doesn't pay any attention to you. Suppose you go first. Suppose you see to it that your sister has an example of an older sister who does the thing she is told the very minute she hears the command. You may not realize it, but she is watching for just that thing.

Perhaps there is somebody in the class in the church school who makes things very disagreeable for the teacher and the rest of the class. Here's a girl who won't pay attention. She always has so many other things to talk about. She is always starting a whispered conversation about last night's party or what happened in school the day before yesterday. You don't see how the teacher can be so patient with her. You have spoken to her. You have pushed and pulled and it doesn't do any good. Suppose you try the other way. Suppose you give her an exhibition of a member of the class thoroughly attentive to the things the class is supposed to be doing. That's worth trying at any rate.

Boys and girls don't like to be yelled at, and pushed, and pounded much more than cows do, but they will follow examples even quicker.

XXXIV

ABOVE THE CLOUDS

I WANT to talk to you to-day about something I saw one summer when we were taking our vacation. You know the State of Vermont is a very hilly state. It hasn't great mountains, like the Rockies and the Sierras away out west, but compared with our Wisconsin hills, they are a pretty good size after all. And I want to talk to you this morning about climbing one of the highest of them.

When Mrs. Scribner and I decided to climb this mountain we started the day before, which is always the way. We packed a car with blankets and food and other camping things, and drove just as near the foot as our car would go. By that time it was dark, and we made our beds under the stars and went to sleep. At about three the next morning, with the first glimmer of light, we got up, scrambled some breakfast together, and started to climb. The trail was well marked and it was no trouble to follow it, but what work it was! We were in a hurry. We wanted to beat the sun. And so up, up, up, we climbed for four or five miles. We were in a forest of little scrubby pines, not very tall, but tall enough so we couldn't see anything but the trail and just

the shape of the mountain before us and above us. Then at last we came out into the open. We had one last steepest scramble for a quarter of a mile or so, and then we were at the top.

Oh, boys and girls, did you ever look from the top of a mountain for miles and miles in every direction with the country spread out like a map below you? I have, many times, but never as we did that day. For that morning it was cloudy in the valley, but up where we were there was the clearest, most brilliant sunshine in the world. Think of it! For perhaps one hundred miles clear around us we could see the valleys all filled with clouds. We could trace them like great, broad rivers of cloud. The mountains were shouldering up out of the mist, and smaller hills here and there stuck their heads up through, but lower down was a long, broad expanse of cloud.

What color do you think it was? From the valley, of course, the clouds looked gray, but from where we were they were all glistening foam-white. It was almost like sunshine on the snow, it was so white. All my life I had been hearing about clouds having silver linings. That day we saw the silver lining. That's the way any cloud looks if you see it from high enough. They look gray to us because they are between us and the sun, but if we could see the sunshine on them, they would be glorious.

Boys and girls, there are clouds in life too. There are clouds that shut out all the sunshine and spoil

all our happiness. There are disappointment clouds. Perhaps all through the spring you looked forward to going to camp in the summer, and then when camp time came you were sick. Perhaps for a long time you have been waiting for your father to buy an automobile, and then when the time came to do it he told you, with disappointment in his face too, that he couldn't afford it.

There are discouragement clouds. Perhaps for a long time you have been working and saving up money toward the time when you shall go to college, and the other day when you figured how much you have it seemed so very, very little. Or perhaps for a year or so you have been trying to learn to play the piano, and it came over you the other day how very little you have learned, and you wondered if there was any use in even trying.

And there are sin clouds. You are not too young to know what it is to be sick with shame and sorrow over some thing you have done and can't forget.

If you look up at those clouds, they seem dark and gray and gloomy; but if you can get to where you can see the sun shining on them, it changes everything. The sun that shines on our clouds is the love of our heavenly Father. The way to get above our disappointments and discouragements and sins is to talk them over with Him. Ask Him to help you be cheerful. Ask Him to help you keep trying. Ask Him to forgive you. And pretty soon His love shines on the cloud and makes it glorious.

XXXV.

“BLOOD WILL TELL”

I HEARD a true story the other day from a lady who raises canary birds. She had one young canary bird just old enough to begin to sing, and as the weather was fine, she had his cage hanging out doors in the sunshine. Now it so happened that in her yard there were a great many blue jays, and you all know what sort of noise a blue jay makes when he tries to sing. It is about the harshest, most disagreeable bird note that we have. And those blue jays must have been making a good deal of noise in that yard from day to day. Because when that canary began to try his voice, what do you think he did? Instead of singing like a canary, he screamed just like a blue jay. He was spoiled for a song bird just because of the company he kept.

You hear people say sometimes that blood will tell. That's partly true, but only partly. This canary's blood was all right. He couldn't have learned to sing at all if he hadn't been a real canary. He had the finest sort of start to be a songbird, fitted to live in a home with people and make them happy and cheerful with his music. But blood couldn't get the better of the company that he kept.

Blood didn't tell enough to make him sing like a canary when he was living with blue jays.

How about you? How many of you boys and girls are sure that yours is the best mother in the world? How many of you believe that you have the best father of any boy alive? Good! I thought so. Your blood is all right. You've got the right sort of start in life. How many of you live in a home where you are being brought up well? Yes, I thought that too. There's every reason why you should make first quality men and women as you grow older. But there's one thing more to remember and to be careful about.

Be careful about the company you keep. See to it that you don't spend your time with blue jays. You have your home, your school, your church, your church school class, your Scout troop, your Girl Reserve group. That's fine. That's the sort of companionship that will add to the start you have and help your blood to tell in the right way. The things you learn there will help you to grow into men and women that your families may be proud of. Those groups make an important part of your education, of your life.

But there are other associations that you can get into if you aren't careful, and that will have a very different effect on you. Sometimes I see a boy, a boy who has had a fine start in the world, watching every chance to slip into a pool room and listen to the stories that he hears from the loafers there.

Sometimes I see a girl who takes the first chance after school to go off with a little knot of gossipers and who uses her eyes and ears to take in just the other sort of talk and just the other sort of things than the ones she hears and sees at home. I have seen boys throw away all that they have learned at home, all they might have learned from the fine, clean, useful groups of friends they might have joined themselves to, and do their very best (or perhaps we ought to say their very worst) to get a different view of life, a different idea of fun, a different notion of what is worth while. And when they try to spoil a good start they find it all too easy to do.

Blood will tell—if you let it. Blood will tell—if you give it a chance. Your blood is of the finest. Don't spoil it!

XXXVI

RULERS AND RULES

Boys and girls, I have some rulers to show you to-day, several different kinds of them. Here is an ordinary yardstick, and it is a pretty good yardstick. It is made of good soft wood. The inches are marked plainly on it. It is *pretty nearly* straight. And you could use it for any of the things that you use a yardstick for perfectly safely. It is just the thing to measure a rug, or to measure a room to see how many rolls of wall paper you want, or to draw a straight chalk line on the blackboard, or do any sort of measuring that you aren't too awfully particular about.

But on your desk you have to have something better. If you're trimming a picture to paste on a calendar pad, it doesn't do to have the edges "just about" right. If you are drawing a straight line on a piece of paper, you want to be sure that there are no nicks in the edges of your rule. So you probably have something like this. This is made of hard wood. The edge is thinned down so that you can lay it close to the thing you are measuring. It has a brass edge that doesn't get nicked or chipped. It is ever so much more accurate.

But for some work even that won't do. Here is an architect drawing the plan of a building. Every line must be just exactly true, every measurement must be just accurate, for an inch on his drawing means perhaps ten feet on the building. So this is the rule he uses. This is made of boxwood—the finest, hardest, closest-grained wood that can be found. Instead of coarse, heavy lines to mark off the divisions, there are fine hair lines. The edges come down to the very surface of the paper. This is the rule that house plans and mechanical drawings and such things are made with.

But even that isn't enough for some pieces of work. A man who works in a machine shop has to measure the tiniest sort of distances. He must cut into the steel he is working on just far enough, and not one smallest fraction of an inch farther. And this is the sort of rule he uses. See, it is a thin strip of tempered, flexible steel. It shows not just quarters or eighths or sixteenths of an inch, but *sixty-fourths*. That is the finest rule that you can get. To measure more accurately than that you must have something besides a rule.

All this talk about rules and rulers makes me think of another sort of rule, doesn't it you? It makes me think of the rules that show us, not how to draw straight lines, but how to live straight lives. And it seems to me that we have about the same difference among the different rules we measure with.

Here is a sort of yardstick rule: "I'll try to do what everybody does." Lots of people use that rule. If most of their friends go to church, they go to church. If most of their schoolmates study, they study. If most of the people they know tell the truth, they tell the truth. And sometimes the rule works fairly well. Everyone of us is kept from making some pretty bad mistakes just by that rule—from more mistakes than we realize, I think. But it leads us into mistakes, too. It isn't a rule you can rely on for any measurement that is really important. Those who always try to follow it find themselves in mighty serious trouble sooner or later, usually sooner.

Here is a rule that is a little better! "I'll look ahead a little, and not do anything likely to get me into trouble." If the rest of the school copy home work from one another, you don't say, "I'll do as the rest do." You say, "No, that will get me into trouble, I'll not do it." If the gang wants to play hookey some fine spring morning, you don't say, "I'll do as the rest do." You say, "There is sure to be trouble for them to-morrow. I'll stay out of it." That's considerably better. But it isn't good enough. For if it is the only rule you have, you don't always know when trouble lies ahead. And more than that, just to keep *yourself* out of trouble is a pretty selfish way to look at life.

Here is one a whole lot better. "I'll do what I truly think mother would like to have me." That's

ever so much better. I knew a grown man once who changed his whole life by taking that for his rule. We're pretty sure not to go very far out of the way so long as we follow it. We'll call that a rule like this beautiful boxwood one. It's almost as good a rule as we could have.

But not quite. For there is another rule—and it isn't even a steel rule like this one, but a Golden Rule. And I guess you know what that is, don't you? "Do to others what you'd like to have others do to you." Learn to use that rule, and you've nothing to worry about.

XXXVII

THE FIRST OF THE MONTH

WHAT day of the month is to-day? Yes, the first. If I were to ask you what the first of the month means, you might have several answers. Some of you might say, "Almost time for school to begin again." Somebody might say, "It is the day we tear off the calendar." Perhaps some of you think of it as the day you get your allowance. But I'll warrant if you were to ask father and mother, you would get a different answer still. The first of the month is the day when the bills fall due. Stores, electric light company, the milk man, the gas company, the garage, all have the fashion of sending for their money the first of the month. And however used you get to it, you're always surprised at the number of bills that come in, and you always wonder whether you can make your money reach around them all.

Some things you cannot pay for every day as you use them. You cannot pay for your milk every morning—probably you aren't up by the time the milk man gets there. You couldn't pay for your gas as you use it. There are other things which, while you could pay for them day by day, are much

more conveniently handled when you pay monthly. But there are still other things about which people fool themselves dreadfully. Sometimes you see a thing that you want, a suit of clothes, or a set of books, a vacuum cleaner, or a radio. And you say, "I can't afford it."

And the man says, "Never mind, we'll charge it."

And you let him charge it. And then you forget about it. And then, bang! along comes the first of the month and here's the bill. "Charge it," is an easy thing to say. It is a great deal easier to get people to say it than it ought to be. And if this sermon could just drive home the lesson of, "Pay as you go," it would save you no end of trouble. For there is always a day of reckoning, and putting off paying for a thing always makes it harder to pay for.

But I've been thinking of another sort of day of reckoning that comes just as surely as the first of the month and comes a great deal more suddenly. There is a way of saying "Charge it," about many things that we don't buy at the store.

Sometimes we say "Charge it" to lessons. There are some words in the spelling lesson that don't hook themselves into our minds. And we say, "Oh, well, we will get them some other time." There are always some few spots in the multiplication table that are harder than others. And it is so easy to say, "Oh, well, that will do for now. I'll go back to

that other later." There's that lesson in geography that you didn't get. There wasn't any question about it in the examination, and you passed on to the next grade, and you forgot all about it. But just as sure as you slip over a lesson instead of paying for it in hard, thorough work, sometime, probably very many sometimes, you will be called on to pay for it! Questions will come up that you ought to be able to answer offhand. And when your mind looks for an answer, there is a blank place there. And the work you didn't do once, you have to do then and there—yes, with a lot more work added as interest. There are one or two spots in the multiplication table that I have to stop and think about right now. "Six times nine," is one of them. I slighted it once. I said, "Charge it." And I'm paying for it over and over again.

Then there are those little pieces of thoughtlessness which seem to mean so little when they happen. You crowd past somebody to get in the door. You grab something without waiting your turn. You tell a little bit of a lie. You say, "I know I shouldn't, but never mind this time." But how many times it happens that there is a day of reckoning that we never expect. I heard of a boy who lost a chance for a job just because the man he applied to had seen him slip off the street car without paying his fare. I knew of a girl who lost a chance for a trip to New York just because her uncle, without her knowing it, saw her cheat in a

game. It doesn't always cost us that much, but it always costs; and just because we don't have to pay right away doesn't make it cost one bit the less. There is a verse in the Bible that says, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

XXXVIII

THE GUIDE'S ROPE

ONCE, boys and girls, I climbed a real mountain. I grew up among mountains in Vermont and climbed them all my life, and I won't let anyone say that they aren't just as fine as any in the world; but just this once I had a chance to climb a mountain just three times as high as the highest in Vermont. And although it is a good while ago now, I still remember it.

We started out in a beautiful green valley and followed a path that went up and up and up. After a while we got to where the trees weren't so high, then after a little more climbing we got above the trees, and later still above the bushes, and still we climbed up. Pretty soon we got to where there was no soil at all, just great bare rocks; and soon after that we came to where there were patches of snow in the hollows of the rocks; and then, after a little more climbing, to a great field of snow, perhaps two miles across. And then we stopped. Our guide took out of his pack a long, slender rope, and he tied one end around his waist, and the middle of the rope around my friend's waist, and the other end around mine; and we went across that snow field roped

together. And I wondered why. It looked simple enough going. It was far easier walking than it had been on the rocks. It wasn't steep and it wasn't slippery.

But farther along I found out. We came to a little dip in the snow with a strange zig-zag crack in the middle. The guide stopped, and we stopped, and gathered at the edge. The guide prodded the snow with his stick, then he told us to stand firm, and he jumped across the crack. He gathered up the slack of the rope and then we each in turn jumped. And when we were on the other side we looked down the crack, and it went down and down and down till we could only guess where the bottom was.

This particular crack was narrow, probably we could have stepped over it, but you never can tell. Sometimes the snow drifts over a wide crack and makes it look narrow. Sometimes no crack shows at all and a traveler crashes through the thin crust of snow and goes down and down and down! That is when he needs the rope. The other men to whom he is tied can brace themselves and stop him and pull him out again. That didn't happen to us. It doesn't often happen to anyone. But it *might* have happened, and the rope was there ready to use if we needed it.

It made me think of the tie between us and God. We know He's somewhere, we don't know just where. We don't seem to need Him much a great

deal of the time. We get along pretty well usually without thinking much about Him, but the times come when we need Him terribly. The times of danger come when it means everything to us just to feel that He is taking care of us. The times come when we feel the weight and the shame of something we have done that we know was wrong. The times of temptation come when we need to cry out for help to somebody. Keep the tie there, boys and girls. Keep in touch with God so that when you need Him you know He's there. One way is by going to church, keeping the habit of worshiping Him and thinking about Him. Another way is by remembering to talk to Him day by day. Another way is by listening to what He says to us through our conscience. He is near us all the time, but the great thing is to keep remembering that He is near us so that when we need Him most we will know how to find Him.

XXXIX

SEEING THROUGH A MAN

I DID a thing last week, boys and girls, that I never did before. If anybody in my grandfather's day had claimed to have done what I really did, he would have been called the clumsiest sort of a liar. If anybody had claimed to have done it in *his* grandfather's day, he might perhaps have been shut up in an insane asylum. And if anybody had claimed to have done it in *his* grandfather's day, he would have run a great risk of being hung for witchcraft. For last week I really and truly saw through a man. I was in the laboratory of one of the clinics of this city, and the doctor said to me, "Step in here." I stepped into a dark room, and there stood a man in front of a machine, with a screen in front of him. A curious greenish light came out of the machine, and when I stood with the man between me and the light, I could see right through him. I could see his ribs and back bone. I could see his lungs fill with air, and empty again as he breathed. I could watch his heart beat. The doctor handed him a bowl of something that looked like milk, and I saw his stomach fill up as he drank it. What would have been a fairy story to my grandfather is

an ordinary thing that happens every day in any good-sized city nowadays.

Would it make you feel nervous to think that the doctor was going to look through you? No, you want him to find out whether anything is the matter. You don't want an ulcer to get started in your stomach or a bad spot in your lungs or an unhealthy growth to your heart. You want him to stop it before it begins. The more the doctor knows about you, the better.

But would it make you feel nervous if somebody could look right through your mind the same way? How would you feel if we had a machine that could tell what you mean by everything you say? How would you like it if there were some sort of ray that would show just what you are thinking about when you sit looking at nothing out of the window? Suppose that there were a machine that would show up all the spots of selfishness, or anger, or insincerity, or nastiness in your mind. Would you want to stand in front of it? I am afraid not one of us would care to. And yet, if there were such a machine, wouldn't we be a little more careful about our thoughts? Suppose we knew that every time we thought one thing and said another it would show out clear for anyone to see. Wouldn't we go to work and clear up that spot of insincerity inside us? If we knew that people could see sick spots in our hearts, wouldn't we be careful to make them clear and sound?

But there is something very like that. There is no machine that lets me, or anyone else, look into your mind, but there is an eye that looks clear and deep into you just the same. Listen:

O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me. . . .

Thou understandest my thought afar off.

There is not a word in my tongue, but lo,

O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.

If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me;

even the night shall be light about me.

Whom does this poet mean? Yes, God. He knows us altogether—sees us through and through and through. He sees the little spots on our thoughts far better than the most skillful doctor in the world sees the spots that are wrong in our bodies. Don't you think it a good plan to remember that, to ask Him to keep us trying to clean up every bit of our mind and heart? It seems to me that if we remember that He sees, we will be far more careful of what we have for Him to see. That was what this poet decided. The poet ends by saying to God about his heart just what you or I would say to the doctor about our bodies:

Search me, O God, and know my heart:

Try me, and know my thoughts:

And see if there be any wicked way in me,

And lead me in the way everlasting.

XL

THE LITTERED WORKSHOP

I WAS thinking the other day, boys and girls, of the shop where I used to work (I called it working) when I was a small boy. In the woodshed behind our house, there was one room finished off in which my father had a small work bench and some pretty good carpenter's tools. I remember that it seemed to me that there were all the tools there that any carpenter could ever possibly use, and there really were a good many more than a boy of my size had any business to fool with. But one summer my father let me use them, and I spent most of my vacation with them.

I can't remember anything that I made or tried to make. I don't believe I made much. But I can still remember very well what that shop looked like when I had been playing in it a few days. The tools were all over the bench and all over the floor. There were piles of shavings so mixed with the tools that you couldn't tell where anything was. There were odds and ends everywhere. Nothing was in its place. The hooks along the wall were empty except for some things that didn't belong there. And, of course, the time would come when I just had to

pick up before I could work there any more. So I would begin.

I can remember how hopeless it looked as I started. I would think to myself, "It can't be done." I would pick up a saw and start to hang it up, but there would be a bitstock where the saw ought to go. I'd lay down the saw and take down the bitstock, forget where the saw was, and lay down the bitstock, and think all the time, "It can't be done." Sometimes I'd spend half a morning that way—picking things up and putting them down, moving things around and putting them down somewhere else, because something else was where I wanted to put them; and thinking all the time, "It can't be done." But sooner or later I would change my way of going at it. I would do one thing at a time and finish it. If I picked up a chisel I would make up my mind not to let go of that chisel till I had put it in the hole in the shelf where it belonged. If I picked up the plane I didn't put it down till it was on its place on the shelf, and the saw on its hook, and the screw driver in its hole, and the bit in its box, and the nail box on its shelf. I did one thing at a time, and finished that thing. And in so short a time that I realize now there couldn't have been as many tools as I used to think; everything was put away, and I could brush off the bench and sweep the floor and it was all done.

That's a good thing to learn. I wish I had it all learned now. Do one thing at a time, and finish it.

Did you ever have a row of onions to weed? You look down along the row and you say, "It will never be done." And it never will so long as you stand looking down along the row. But if you get down on your knees and pull this weed, and the next, and the next, and the next, you will be surprised to see how soon you come to the end of the row that you were never going to reach.

Did you ever have a page of addition to do? Did you look at it and say, "I'll never get it done"? You never will get it done by looking at it. I can remember being so sure that I would never get a page of figures done that I didn't even start them. But add two figures, and another to that sum, and another to that, and another, and another; and by and by you're done.

Did you ever have a stack of dishes to do and did you ever say, "Oh, they'll take forever"? So they will, if you stand off and growl at them. But if you do this dish, and this, and this, and this, sooner or later you come to the bottom of the pile.

Well, you can think up enough more things yourselves. This is the sermon in four words: "Do the next thing."

XLI

“HE CAN’T AFFORD TO MISS”

As I went down Milwaukee Street to-day I saw a ridiculous picture of a man lying on his back on the ground with a golf ball resting on his chin, with another man standing over him with a golf club just ready for a drive at that ball. If he swings half an inch out of the way with that club he will break the man’s nose or his jaw. And over the picture were these words: “HE CAN’T AFFORD TO MISS.”

That set me thinking. When can you afford to miss?

When the game is nothing to nothing in the last half the ninth inning? Certainly not. But can you afford to miss when the score is nothing to nothing in the first half the first inning? Or when you are a couple of runs ahead? Or when you are playing with a team not nearly so good as you? Many a team has spoiled its game by thinking that it could afford to miss a few chances to score against a weak team. It beat the weak team, all right, but it started habits of careless play that it couldn’t get over for weeks.

When can you afford to miss? In the final examination when you wonder whether or not you will

pass and get a chance at the next grade next fall? Certainly not. But can you afford to miss just because your grade so far happens to be in the eighties? Can you afford, really afford, to let yourself start slipping? Indeed you can't. There is no worse way to hurt your school work than to think that a day or so won't make any difference. You start to slip, and it isn't so easy to pull up.

When can you afford to miss? When you are doing a piece of work, and you know that dad is watching out of the corner of his eye? Certainly not. But can you afford to miss when you are left alone with a piece of work, and you know that dad isn't even going to ask you how it came out? Can you afford to let your mind learn careless work, and your conscience learn to say, "I guess that's good enough," *any* time?

When can you afford to miss? Can you afford to tell a lie, or be selfish, or tease a smaller boy or girl, and get caught at it? Certainly not. But can you afford to be dishonest, or cruel, or stingy, or mean, *ever*?

Boys and girls, YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO MISS. There just isn't any time when slipshod work, or don't care spirit, or half trying, or giving in to temptation is safe. Be your best, always, everywhere, steadily—and you won't worry about the special times.

XLII

THE GIRL WHO WORSHIPED IDOLS

I'M going to tell you a story that was told me by a lady about her little niece. Once she heard her saying her prayers, and this is what the little girl said: "God, I've asked you for this thing twice already, and you haven't given it to me. Now I'm going to ask you this once more, and then if you don't give it to me I'm going to worship idols."

What do you think of the little girl? Was that a good, fair proposal to make to God, or wasn't it? What do you think? You shake your heads. I agree with you. But what was the trouble with the prayer?

I suppose the first trouble was that she thought she knew better than God what she ought to have from Him. Sometimes we pray for things that would hurt us terribly if we had them! Haven't you seen a baby sometimes cry for the bright fire? Or a little bit bigger baby tease for candy enough to make him sick? And when this little girl tried just to *scare* God into giving her what she wanted, maybe she wanted something that would be as bad for her as the fire would for the baby.

But there was still another trouble with that little

girl's prayer, and I'm afraid the same thing is the trouble with the prayers of older people as well. She was thinking just of *getting things*. It was "give me, *give me*, GIVE ME"—and even if the thing she wanted was the best thing in the world, isn't that a pretty poor way to talk to God? God loves to give us things, and He loves to have us ask Him, but if all we talk about to Him is about the things we *want*, don't you think He is going to find it pretty tiresome? I hope you don't talk to your own fathers that way! They, too, love to give you things, but I can tell you something else they love—they love to hear a little boy say sometimes what I heard a very little boy say a few days ago: "Daddy, I wish you'd move your study down stairs again, because we miss you so badly when you're up there." They love to hear a "Thank you," or a "You're a pretty fine dad to me," or, "Can I do something to help you to-day?" And that's what God loves to hear, too.

When we begin a brand new day, let's take time in the morning (it only takes a second or two) to say "Thank you" to God for the day that's before us, and for the rested bodies and minds that we have to begin it with. When we have made a mistake, let's think to tell God that we are sorry, and to promise Him that we will try harder next time. We don't need to kneel down, or to close our eyes, or to say a word out loud. He will understand. When the day is over and we have gone to bed, after we have said all our usual prayers, let's think for a few

minutes before we drop off to sleep of how many things God has given us that day, and of how grateful we are to Him for them. Let's think of how safe we are in His keeping. And let's thank Him for his care and protection. Let's remember sometimes how much we love Him and how much we care for His love for us. And let's tell Him about it. That is one kind of prayer we are all too apt to forget, but it is the finest kind of all.

XLIII

BARGAINS

I SUPPOSE you were all at the stores last Friday, looking for bargains. There were plenty of them, surely, and many good ones. But I wonder whether you noticed what I have noticed at every bargain sale I ever saw—there are always some things that aren't marked down. If it is shoes, there will be counters full marked down from \$10.00 to \$6.23, or from \$8.00 to \$4.98, but when you find the pair you want the clerk says, "I'm sorry, but there is never but one price on that shoe." If it is clothing, there are all sorts of suits at prices to make your mouth water till you find the particular suit you want to buy, and then the man says, "You understand, our sale doesn't apply to these goods." It is the same with dishes, or jewelry, or automobile tires. There are always some things that don't come at bargain prices. That is nothing against the things that are marked down; but it is sometimes a disappointment to find, as I am all the time finding, that the things I want most are the things that require full price. And still I don't know but that it is fair enough. For somehow or other, the things that don't get

marked down seem to wear rather longer than the bargain things.

It has made me think of how many things there are that seem to demand full price if they are to be bought at all. There is education, for instance. You can't get any bargain price on that. The price of education is *w-o-r-k*. Sometimes you may think you have a bargain. Sometimes you think that you can get a bargain lesson at the reduced price of copying somebody's else work, or a bargain mark bought cheaply by bluffing the teacher, but when you look it over you find that that isn't education. There's only one price on that article. Some people try to invent bargain sales, but there is no chance.

There was once a girl who was taking music lessons. One day she was taken to hear a great pianist, and she even had the chance to be introduced to him. And she said, "There isn't anything in the world that I wouldn't give to be able to play the piano as you do." The man looked at her and said, "Are you willing to give eight hours every day for fifteen years?" You see, you can't get real first-rate skill at the piano or anything else cheaply. There aren't any bargains.

A man called on his friend once, and as they were talking the second man's son came into the room, a fine, straight, manly fellow. He talked for a minute with his father and went out. The first man watched him go, then turned to his friend and said, "I'd give

my life for a boy like that." And the friend answered, "Well, that's what it costs." There are no bargain sales there, either.

There are no bargain sales on character. People try to get one cheaply, but every cheap character shows its flaws sooner or later. Character costs the hard "no" instead of the easy "yes." It costs the hard finishing, instead of the easy quitting when you are half done. It costs the hard truth instead of the easy lie, the hard fight instead of the comfortable lying down.

There are things that come at bargains. You can get good times cheaply—good times that last for a while. But they are apt to give out all of a sudden, and leave a bad taste in your mouth. Now and then you can get a good reputation cheaply, for a short time. But if it was bought cheaply, it is apt to go to pieces sometime when you least expect it. You can get a certain sort of good fellowship cheaply, but not the sort that lasts. Real friendship, and real character, and real happiness cost. You must pay well, and pay down. But they are worth it.

XLIV

THE REFEREE

I SUPPOSE you have been going to the football games this fall. If you have, you must have noticed how now and then when the game is going on, a man who has been walking up and down the sidelines suddenly rushes out toward the players, blowing his whistle or honking his horn. He runs right into the midst of the group, grabs the ball, and takes it back where it started from, or five or ten or fifteen yards farther. That's the referee. He's there to see that everything in that game goes according to the rules of football. If some player starts before he has the right to, or if somebody in the lineup edges ahead of the ball, or if somebody grabs another player with his hands instead of just getting in his way as the rules allow, it is the business of that man to see it. And that horn which he holds in his hand is ready at any time to honk out its message, "No fair! No fair! Take that ball back where it was and take your penalty."

There's no fun in any game that isn't played according to the rules. But right in the midst of the game sometimes you forget without meaning to,

and I'm afraid that there are some people who forget on purpose; and so in every important game we have an official whose business it is to watch for those cases, to set things right, and to see to it that the team that isn't fair is given something to remind it.

How would it be if we appointed a referee to go around with us and see to it that we play every game according to the rules—to watch for the times when we forget to be fair, yes, and the times when we don't want to remember—and honk a horn in our ears and tell us to go back where we started? You wouldn't like it at all, would you? I am sure I wouldn't. I'd hate to feel that I needed a man to watch me, or that you did. But how would it be if each one of us appointed himself referee and set himself to watch himself, to see to it that things go the way they should, that play is fair, that work is square, and that every day is lived as it should be? That would be different, wouldn't it?

Suppose that some day in school you have the chance to give an answer that doesn't really belong to you—you can see the words on somebody's else spelling paper, or you can borrow the answers to somebody's arithmetic—and it seems to you a nice, easy way out of a situation. Can you be ready to honk that horn at yourself, not a horn that anyone else can hear, but a horn that you can hear because it is inside your own conscience? Can you say to

yourself, "No fair! No fair! That isn't according to the rules. Stop right where you are. Begin over again and do it right!"

Or suppose that some day you are very much interested telling a story about somebody in your school whom you don't particularly like. It is a story that you have heard. You don't know whether it's true or not, but you'd like to believe it is, because you don't like the person that it is about. Can you act as referee then, and honk that horn in your own ear, and say, "Hold on there, that isn't fair. You don't know that's true. Perhaps it isn't. Even if it is, it isn't kind. No fair! Stop! Go back and begin over again!"

Suppose that some Saturday you have been having a good time in the house playing with one thing after another that you have taken down from the shelf, or out of the drawer. And it suddenly occurs to you how much fun it would be to go out doors and play a while now. And you start to get your hat and coat, stepping over the books and games and toys that just about cover the floor of the living room—can you stop yourself and honk that horn in your ear and say, "No fair! No fair! Somebody has to pick those things up. You got them out. Don't leave them for mother. It will take a little while, but you're the one to do it. Stop! Go back! Be fair!"

You won't like the sound of that horn that nobody

else can hear. You won't like to set yourself back ten yards every now and then. But you will get just as far in the end if you are your own referee. And it will save you a great deal of interference from other people.

XLV

NOTHING TO NOTHING

OF course we are disappointed in yesterday's game, boys and girls, everybody is. There isn't a great deal of satisfaction to a nothing-to-nothing score, is there? It might have been worse, and we know the team did well, but it wasn't what we wanted and it wasn't what they wanted. It is something not to be beaten. Sometimes it is a great deal. But everybody who plays football or any other game wants to win, and the boy or girl who's really, truly satisfied with a nothing-to-nothing score has something wrong with him.

Don't misunderstand me. I'm not criticizing the team, and I'm not saying for a moment that winning the game is the really important thing in football. It isn't. Sometimes a nothing-to-nothing score speaks a tremendous deal for a team. Certainly we will cheer our team with a nothing-to-nothing score as though it was seventeen to nothing or seventy to nothing in our favor. But there are other games besides football where there is no excuse for such a score. Let's look out for them.

There are people whose school record is nothing to nothing. They have never had to repeat a grade. They have never downright failed in a course. But

they have never had honorable mention. They have never had a report card that they have been really, downright proud of. They have just gotten by. They have had no failures. They have had no credit. It has been nothing to nothing.

Sometimes boys and girls try to obey in a nothing-to-nothing way. Dad says, "Clean out the furnace before you go to school." You go down, look at it, shake it down a little, take out a few shovelful of ashes, spill some on the floor on the way to the ash pit, haven't time to clean it up, bang the furnace door shut and go and leave it. You didn't disobey. You didn't obey. It has been nothing to nothing.

I remember an old nursery rhyme that tells about Mother Goose's son. His name was Jack and he was

A plain looking lad,
Not very good
And not very bad.

I know people like that. They don't tell lies, or run away from school, or steal, or break windows. There is nothing much against them. But neither do they help people much, or get into the work of the church or Y. M. C. A. or Y. W. C. A. They don't stand for anything. There is nothing much in their favor. They also are nothing to nothing.

Boys and girls, a hard-fought football game is a fine thing even at nothing to nothing. But there is no excuse for a nothing-to-nothing character. Don't have one!

XLVI

A MAN OR A SHEEP?

JESUS asked a strange question once: "How much, then, is a man better than a sheep?"

Of course, what Jesus meant was that a man is very much better than a sheep. He meant that just as a shepherd is careful of his sheep, we ought to be very much more careful of any human being we can help; for the least human soul in the world is precious to God. But sometimes, I think, we need to look pretty hard at that verse, and make sure we are better than sheep.

Do you know sheep? There's a story that once in an arithmetic class the teacher said, "There were ten sheep in a field. Two jumped over the fence. How many were left?"

And a farmer boy answered right away, "Not any!"

"Why, what do you mean?" asked the teacher.

And the boy answered, "Not any! You may know figures, teacher, but you don't know sheep."

The farmer boy was right. If there were ten sheep in a field, or one hundred sheep, and two of them jumped the fence, every other sheep in the flock would follow right on after and there wouldn't be

any left. Sheep always do what other sheep do. They seem to have no sense at all except to follow each other anywhere.

How much is a man, or a boy, or a girl, better than a sheep? What do you do when the crowd you are with does things you know you shouldn't? When the boys you are with think that it is smart to swear, do you follow on after? When you like your teacher, but the other youngsters in the class all make fun of her, do you stick up for her? When the girls who are your friends wear clothes that you know your father can't afford, do you make his life miserable for him, teasing to do as the others do? If you find yourself in a crowd that's doing what you think in your heart you shouldn't, brace up and say to yourself, "I'm no sheep."

There's another thing you know about sheep if you have ever seen much of them. A sheep is the worst quitter in the world. Everybody knows how a cat lands if she falls off a high place—she lands on her feet. Perhaps some of you have held a kitten by the four legs and dropped her, just to see her twist around in the air. I don't recommend it—you are likely to get well scratched, and you deserve to—but it works just the same. Did you ever try to shut up a dog, and have you noticed how sure he is to get free if there is the least possible chance? A horse in a tight place struggles and kicks and tries. You've all heard the riddle, "What makes more noise than a pig under a gate?" But it isn't

so with a sheep. When a sheep gets down so that it is a little bit hard for her to get up, she just lies there. If she gets her neck through a fence, or wanders into a tight place in the pasture, or feels a little bit sick, she just lies down and waits to be helped. If no one comes to help her, she dies. A sheep doesn't know what it is to try. She doesn't know what it is to fight.

"How much is a man better than a sheep?" How much better are you? When you come to a new sort of example in the arithmetic book, do you look at it and say, "I can't do it," and wait for the teacher or for father to do it for you? Or do you puzzle over the rule, and work, and *work*? When you work it out wrong the first time, do you quit trying; or do you work it out again and get it wrong that time, and then another time, until, the tenth or eleventh time, you get it right?

When you are reading along and come to a word you don't know, do you skip it and go on, or stop and wait for the teacher or for the boy sitting next to you to tell you, or do you puzzle along through it, letter by letter, and do your best to make out what it means?

If you have a new sort of job to do that calls for a little more effort than you usually put forth, do you put it off and look at it and wait till somebody does it for you or makes you do it, or do you buckle to and do the best you can?

When you are in a tight place, when things aren't

162 THE PORTION FOR THE CHILDREN

going the way you have always expected them to, that's the time to show how much spunk or how much fight there is in you. Brace your shoulders back and square your jaw and say to yourself, "I'm no sheep."

XLVII

ON DUTY

SOME time ago, boys and girls, I happened to be talking with a policeman in this city. I was curious to know something about a policeman's work. We all see them many times a day, as they stand at a crossing to keep the traffic moving safely, or as they walk their beats day and night to make sure that everything is right; but how little we know about them, or the work they do for us. Well, after asking him some other questions, I said, "How long do you have to work each day? What hours are you on duty?"

"Well," he said, "that depends on what you mean. I'm on my beat such and such hours—but I'm on duty all the time. Any policeman in the city is on duty at any time. You could get me up out of bed to make an arrest, and I'd have to come."

Isn't that a pretty fine thing? "I'm on duty all the time." That means that when a policeman takes the job of keeping this city safe for you and me, he isn't a policeman just for the hours that he walks up and down the streets with his uniform on and his club in his hand—he is a policeman always, and ready to act as a policeman. He is on duty.

Are we on duty all the time? Some people try to be Christians on Sunday, especially at church time, and then forget about it the rest of the week. They wouldn't make very good policeman, would they? Some boys and girls could tell you in church school all about being kind or brave or true, but they seem to feel as if they are off duty as soon as church school is over. I have heard of boys who were very helpful to their fathers and mothers along before Christmas, but found it a very hard thing to remember to be on duty the rest of the year. I have known of people who find it easy to be cheerful and pleasant in the morning after a good night's sleep and a good hot breakfast, but who don't find it nearly so easy in the evening, after a hard day's work, especially if supper is a little late. "On duty all the time!" Are we?

Suppose that we appoint ourselves policemen this week. We have our regular work to do, at home and at school. We'll call that our beat. But we are on duty all the time, remember. Mother is busy when we get home. Her work is rushed and late. Come on, policeman, on duty! Find the chance to help! After supper your brother makes a rather mean remark, and there's a quarrel not far off. Arrest it, quick! Stop the answer you were all ready to make. Slip the handcuffs on your temper. This isn't your regular day's work, but you are on duty all the time.

The Bible says, "The day of the Lord cometh like

a thief in the night." I won't try now to explain just what "the day of the Lord" means, but this much you may be sure of. The best things in life, and the most dangerous things in life, come when we aren't expecting them. They come as unexpectedly as a thief. And the way to take advantage of the best things, and to get the better of the dangerous things, is just to be always on duty.

XLVIII

"AN EXCELLENT SPINE"

THERE is a story about a boy who was reading aloud from the Bible the story of Daniel. And like some other boys, he sometimes guessed at a word instead of looking carefully to see what it really was. Now this is the verse he was reading: "Daniel had an excellent spirit in him." And this is the way he read it: "Daniel" (that was easy—he was reading about Daniel) "had an" (no trouble with those words) "excellent" (that was hard, but he spelled it out to himself and got by pretty well; and then came the next word—s-p-i- yes, he knew what that was, and so he read): "Daniel had an excellent spine in him."

That wasn't so bad a mistake after all. Daniel *had* an excellent spine in him. It took an excellent spine to stand up and say that he didn't want the king's meat and wine. It called for a spine to tell the king what he could read in the handwriting on the wall. It took a great deal of spine, of backbone, to say his prayers in front of the open window when it meant being thrown into the den of lions. I rather like the reading. It makes me think of

what I once heard about three kinds of bones, and three kinds of people who have them.

Now the first kind is a wish bone. There are people who seem to be all wish. They wish and wish and wish. Grown people of that sort are always wishing they had a better job, or more pay. They are wishing the boss would take more notice of their work. They are wishing that they could save more money. There are boys and girls like that in school. They are wishing for better marks, wishing that the teacher wasn't so down on them, wishing they could make the football team, or the basketball team. There are boys and girls like that in church. They wish for a better class in church school, wish for more fun there, wish for more interesting lessons. And that's all right. But these people take it out in wishing. It never occurs to them that they have anything to do with getting all the things they wish for. That's the first sort of bone.

Then there are people with jaw bones. They do something besides wishing. They talk. How they talk! They talk about what ought to be done. They talk about other people's mistakes. They talk about things they are going to do sometime, maybe. There are grown men like that. They sit around the corner store, or the pool room, or the hotel lobby, and talk about how foolish the men in Congress are, or what a poor governor we have. They talk about what awful things young people do. They talk about what bad laws are made. And they decide that the

country is going to the dogs. There are people like that in every church. They talk about the trustees and the ushers and the choir. They talk about the minister, of course, and can tell you how many things are being done in a slipshod, shiftless way. There are boys and girls like that in every school. They talk about the class president, the teachers, the basket ball team, and the coach. They know all the mistakes that anybody has made. They talk about themselves, too—what they would do if they had a chance, how it isn't their fault that they didn't do better, what they said, and what they thought. But somehow these people don't do anything besides talk. That's the second kind of bone.

But there is another kind. There are people like Daniel with excellent spines, or, as we say, with backbones. They wish, of course, but they know there is no use wishing without working; and when they have wished for a thing, they go to work to see how to get it, and they don't stop working if it doesn't come their way the first time they try. They talk, too, a little. They don't talk so very much—they haven't time to. But when you hear one of them say a thing you pay attention to it, for you know that he is ready to back up what he says with hard work. The people with backbone are the people who do things. They don't let themselves become discouraged. They are never ready to quit. They don't believe that a thing can't be done just because it never has been done. They make their

wishes into purposes; and they make their purposes into hard work; and they make their hard work into success. That was the way with Daniel and that is the way with everybody who has an excellent spine in him.

XLIX

THE SAND IN THE BEARINGS

WHEN I was a boy, boys and girls, I used to have one chore to do that I'll warrant none of you has. How many of you ever greased the wheels of a carriage? I thought not!

Now when I was a boy wasn't so very, very long ago; but it was long before we had ever heard of "grease guns," or "Alemite systems," or the other things that we use on automobiles. And compared with automobiles, the greasing of a carriage was a very simple matter. In the first place, I had a piece of board, with notches in one end, just long enough so that when the axle rested in a notch the wheel was clear of the floor. That was my jack. Then I had a wrench that just fitted the big square nut that held the wheel on, and with the help of that I took the wheel off. Then I had a round can of axle grease (we didn't know anything about "heavy" and "medium" and "light"—grease was grease) and a flat stick. And with the stick I could smear some grease on the axle and put the wheel back in place. Then I screwed the nut on again, tightened it, pulled the board out, and did the next wheel.

You can understand how it sometimes happened, working with an open tin box and a flat stick, that sand got into the grease, and so on the axle. And when it was spread on the axle and the wheel was in place, and the nut screwed on tight, there was no way for it to get out. And when the wheel went around, it scratched and cut. It ground off tiny bits of steel, and they scratched and cut and ground off more to scratch and cut. And before very long the whole axle was spoiled, unless I found out about it in time and took the wheel off again, and wiped it dry and put in clean grease. An axle *never* wore out so long as it was kept well greased and clean. But with ever so little sand where it didn't belong, no axle ever lived long.

The sand in those bearings makes me think of a great many things that get in where they do not belong, and make trouble. Did you ever have something on your mind that you knew well you ought to tell your mother, but dreaded, and dreaded, and dreaded to tell? One day when mother was out, you borrowed her best dishes. And you broke one! And then you thought: "If I put them away, with the broken one at the back, she won't notice it for a long, long time. And when she does, she may not know that it was I." And you put them away. And then you thought, "But I ought to tell her." And the more you thought about it, the surer you were that you ought to tell her, but the harder it seemed to do it. Finally you said, "I *will* tell her—but not

now. I'll tell her this evening." And then you decided, "No, I'll tell her to-morrow." And that thing that you had done just wore, and wore, and wore, till it pretty nearly wore you out. There is only one thing to do when you have a bit of sand like that in the bearings of your mind—take it out!

Once almost before you knew it you discovered that you had told a real, cowardly lie. And you didn't know what to do. And the first thing that you thought of was to tell another lie to cover that one up. And then you told another to cover *that* one up. And so it went, grinding, grinding, grinding at your conscience, making you more and more miserable. There is only one way to get that sand out of your bearing. Own right up—tell the truth, and take whatever comes. Then you can begin to run smoothly again.

One day Bill laughed at you. You told him what you thought of him mighty quick. He answered back. Next day you didn't speak to each other as you passed on the street. You stopped coming to the boys' club that you and Bill belonged to. The picnic was spoiled because you were both there. And that quarrel sand kept grinding away at you both, till you were pretty nearly worn out. But it wasn't so hard to take out. All it needed was for one of you to say, "I'm sorry." And how foolish to wait so long!

There is no sense in spoiling our lives by letting

the sand stay in the bearings. Big things or little, we can take them out. The Bible says even of the biggest mistakes that we make, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

L

THE BURNING GLASS

How many of you boys and girls know what this is? Some of you say, "It's a magnifying glass." Some of you call it a "microscope." Some of you say, "a lense." Yes, it is all those things. It used to be part of a stereopticon till it got cracked. Now it is good only for a paper weight or a plaything.

But how many of you know what would happen if you were to take this lense out into the bright sunshine, and hold it over a piece of paper? Some of you know. It would burn a hole in no time, and if you were careful you could set the paper on fire. Sometimes you hear a lense like this called a "burning glass." In the old days before matches were invented, people used to use them sometimes to start fires with. It is quicker than rubbing sticks, and less work than a flint and steel, and if the sun is bright enough it is every bit as good.

But *why* does it make a fire? Why will letting the sun shine through glass make it hotter than it is anyway? I'll tell you. When a ray of sunlight falls on this glass it is *bent* a little. One sunbeam is bent a little this way, and another is bent a little this way, and all the sunbeams that fall on this

whole big circle of glass are bent so as to meet at one little point at the center. Now sunshine scattered is warm and bright and pleasant. But when millions of sunbeams are crowded together in one little space, they are *blinding* bright and *burning* hot. It is bringing them all together that does it. Then it burns.

I want to talk to you about a long word with a simple meaning. CONCENTRATION. Leave off the "con" and the "ation" and you have what? "Center." Now concentration just means bringing all your thoughts and all your trying right down to one center, just as this glass brings the sunbeams all together at one center. And just as sunbeams *burn* when they are concentrated—crowded together at one CENTRAL point—so will your thoughts *work* when they are CONCENTRATED—brought *all together* at the one thing you are trying to do.

Suppose you sit down with your home work. You begin to say to yourself: "r-e-c-e-i-v-e, r-e-c-e-i-v-e. Let's see, how many weeks till vacations? r-e-c-i-e-v-e, receive, r-e-c-i-e-v-e receive. Wish we had a bird club at our school. r-e-s-i-e-v-e, receive, r-e-s-e-i-v-e." See? Your thoughts are all scattered. Home work doesn't get *warmed*, much less burned. Forget vacation, forget last night's party, forget what teacher said to Billy Jones, forget everything but that spelling lesson, and you'll have it, and you won't spell "r-e-s-i-e-v-e" either.

Suppose you're playing baseball. And you look

at the batter and then at the ball game in another part of the park, and then at the other fielder, and then at a boy you know passing by—where will you be when a hot one comes sizzling out your way? CONCENTRATE. Bring your eyes and your mind and your will and your attention right down to the *one spot* of that ball game. You'll never be a Ty Cobb by mooning around the field.

They say that you can have anything you want if you only want it hard enough. I don't know whether that is true or not. But I do know that it is *hard* wanting, and *hard* thinking, and *hard* working—and all those things CONCENTRATED in one spot—that gets any sort of work done. Whether it's lessons or music or baseball or rope-skipping, let's all get imaginary burning glasses, and always hold them over our work till we use every bit of our strength at the thing we have to do.

LI

THE CHRISTMAS INVITATION

I WANT to tell you to-day a story about Christmas. People, in some parts of the world, believe that the story is true. And whether we can quite believe it or not, I think we will all agree it is a beautiful story that has given us a beautiful custom to add to the things that we do on Christmas.

You remember how, on the night when Jesus was born, nobody would give room for him in any home, so that his father and mother had to find a place in a stable and had to lay the baby in a manger for a cradle. Well, this story is that every Christmas eve the little Christ-child goes all over the world, over all the streets of the cities, along all the country roads, passing every beautiful house of the richest people and every poorest house, too, looking always to see whether people are willing to let him come in. And people who believe this story believe, too, that those who really want to invite him set a lighted candle in the window of their homes to guide him on his way. But sometimes, they say, he comes in the guise of some hungry person, or some lonely person, or somebody who needs help in some other way—and if they really want to serve the Christ-child

they give what help they can to the ones that come in his name.

There is a verse that goes with this story, which I read a good while ago and copied down to remember.

Turn no one from your door this night
In country lane or crowded town.
For, know you not? on Christmas eve
The Christ-child wanders up and down.

Or rich or poor, if you can help,
Turn none away with careless frown,
Whate'er His guise, this very night
The Christ-child wanders up and down.

I suppose that it is from this story that we get our custom of putting candles in our windows on Christmas eve. I don't know how many of you have been doing it, but I think that it is a splendid thing to do. Of course, we will be very, very careful when we do it not to put the candle where it could possibly tip over, or where the curtain could possibly get into it—or perhaps we can even use an electric light that doesn't set anything on fire at all. But I wish we might all think of the legend on Christmas eve this week, and just pretend to ourselves that we believe it, and set a light in our windows for the Christ-child, so that He may know, and every passer-by may know, "There is a home that would like to have him come."

But if we do, we must remember the rest of the

story too. For if we really want to do things for Christ, he has told us how we may. "What you do for my brothers," he said, "you do for me." And he explained that by his "brothers" he meant all people who need help of any kind.

If we want to have the sort of Christmas to which we could invite Christ, let's remember him in our planning. Let's plan some Christmas gifts for him—for his "brothers" I mean, of course. You from the church school have already learned how you may do that, and if you aren't in the church school you can easily find out about some who need your help. Then you can feel that you have showed Jesus that you really mean your invitation.

LII

"THANK YOU" NOTES

DID you all have a Merry Christmas last week? Good! I thought you would. Did you get some fine presents? Splendid! Have you thanked everyone yet for what he gave you? That's a mean question! I would hate to have to answer it myself right now. It is pretty soon after Christmas to expect anybody to have all his letters written saying, "Thank you," to the friends who were so kind as to send him things at Christmas time. It sometimes takes me a good deal longer than this.

I remember very well how it used to be when I was a boy. About this time of year, mother would say to me, "Frank, have you written to thank Uncle John?"

And I would have to say, "No, not yet."

"Have you written to Cousin Mary?"

"Not yet."

"Have you written to grandfather?"

"No."

"Well, you must, you know."

Of course I knew! I knew that mother would keep after me till I did. And I wanted to, too. But it was so hard to do. I didn't know what to say;

you can't fill a letter with just "Thank you," you know. And my fingers got tired. And the letter always looked so crooked and straggly before it was half done. And there were so many other things to do. And I put it off, and put it off, and kept saying, "Not yet." And then, about New Year's day, there would come a day when mother would say, "Frank, you sit right down in that chair and write those letters."

And then I did. And I was glad that I did. And I felt better because I did. They weren't very good letters, but they did let my friends know that I cared about them and the things they had sent me.

Now all the time I was postponing those letters, I was telling myself that I was just as thankful as if I said so. But I wasn't. I really was thinking about myself, and what I wanted to do, and didn't want to do. I was forgetting the things I had received and the thoughtfulness of the people who had given them, and I was really losing the feeling of thankfulness out of my heart. If you don't *say* "Thank you," after a while you don't *think* "Thank you." And the fact that it is sometimes hard to say doesn't make any difference at all.

And, do you know, that is exactly the reason why some people forget all about God? They are thankful to Him for all his gifts to us. But they don't know just how to say so. And it is hard work really to bring their minds down to talking with Him. And there are always so many other things

to think of. And they put off, and put off, and put off—till they just forget all about Him.

Let's be careful that we never forget. If we find that we are in danger of doing so, let's take ourselves right in hand. And we'll find that the oftener we say "Thank you" to Him, the easier it will be. And the more we tell Him that we are thankful, the more real joy we will get out of the beautiful things that He gives us.

IRA J. TAYLOR LIBRARY
THE ILIFF SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
DENVER, COLORADO



